

# THE LONG STRAIGHT ROAD



GEORGE  
HORTON



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**THE LONG  
STRAIGHT ROAD**





# THE LONG STRAIGHT ROAD

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By GEORGE HORTON

"Times are changed with him who marries;  
there are no more by-path meadows, where you  
may innocently linger, but the road lies long and  
straight and dusty to the grave."

Robert Louis Stevenson

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TO  
**CHARLES E. RUSSELL**

**POET, GENTLEMAN, FRIEND**



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# THE LONG STRAIGHT ROAD

## CHAPTER I

### A LITTLE SUPPER

A young man stood at the intersection of South Water and State Streets, looking west. His hands were in the pockets of his raglan coat, and there was an American cigarette in his mouth. He was a product of city life, and of large city life at that, and he had become accustomed to seeing the world through clouds of soft-coal smoke. His visual nerves, moreover, were dulled by the fierce impact of electric light, by which his office was illuminated, even through many hours of the day, and he was therefore almost blind to those revelations of nature which show that she is yearning over her lost children of the cities. He was looking with but a vague sense of wonder and awe at a picture worthy the pen of a Dante or the brush of a Turner.

About him in all directions save one towered the great, grim, implacable city, graying and chilling beneath the wing of descending night. Countless

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tall plumes of smoke, black at the base and blue-gray in the feather, swayed and nodded in the wind upon the roofs of buildings. Every few moments, when the breeze swooped downward, they fluttered to the street and sifted the air full of grimy dust. The whole effect was titanic, sulphurous, plutonian. Electric lights gleamed fiercely through the shifting vapors as coals might glow in the smoke of hell. The Masonic Temple lifted its lean stories to the sky as though it were a great rock pitted with little holes and tunnels and caverns for the dwellers of the air. As the lights were turned on sporadically over its vast surface, one imagined, if he were blessed with the power of imagination, that a hundred prehistoric men were blowing the embers of their smoldering fires. Or, if his mind ran farther back to the old, gloomy, gigantic days of so-called heathen mythology, he saw there Prometheus indeed, chained to the rock by man's Jovian intellect. And with all this impression of vastness and power and loneliness, which the spirit of man feels in the heart of the great city as strongly as on a mountain top, there was blended the leaven of modernity and of progress. Yonder, high above the heads of the pedestrians in State Street, the cars of the Metropolitan "L" darted east and west through a tunnel of glass, invisible, save for the

lights with which they ran to and fro as with torches.

South Water Street was a long, narrow gorge, as lifeless and desolate at this hour as the bed of a lost river. It seemed a squalid hallway, upon whose walls of red brick the disused awnings were spread like frayed and dirty cobwebs. Homing carts rattled by over the cobble stones, and two or three belated market wagons were backed against the curb. A few broken barrels and as many piles of boxes added to the ugliness of the vista, which was not improved by an occasional heap of refuse. All this was of man's doing, this chaining of Prometheus, this building of gorges for the rivers of humanity, of which we are but drops that pass and come no more forever; even the pall of smoke, enshrouding the lofty buildings until they were transformed into the towers and battlements of some great capital of Dis, was vomited forth from a thousand fires that were doing the will of man. The grimness, the weight, the relentless usefulness of it all were of his invention. Nay, he had even gone further and added a few touches to the sunset just now fading from the foot of South Water Street. As the young man had walked briskly north on State, he had glanced westward down Washington, Randolph, Lake.

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In each instance the sun was setting so squarely at the foot of the street that the fiery red disk seemed about to slide down and across the narrow way and to close it like a gate. Now it lost shape in a cloud of smoke, which it was pouring full of lurid glory, as though it were blazing in the heart of its own vapor, caused by an ineffectual attempt at quenching. This spectacle, too, was plutonic, and its vast and gloomy majesty harmonized well with its foreground.

The very modern young man whose unseeing eyes were taking in the city with no other thought than the trite reflection that the Masonic Temple was a "sky-scraper," and an associative wonder as to whether the "Girl with the Auburn Hair" was there this week or not, felt indeed a vague uplifting as he gazed upon that celestial conflagration at the foot of South Water Street. But the emotion was fleeting. Taking a handsome, open-face watch from his pocket, he glanced at it, muttering, "Quarter of six. I'm a quarter of an hour early. How did that happen, I wonder?" For five minutes he tramped a short beat on the sloppy walk, stamping to keep his feet warm. But his coat, though fashionable, was not very thick, and his brown fedora offered no protection to his ears; for it was the twenty-seventh day of February, and the walk was

fringed with a mound of dirty snow. As he walked, he hummed softly the air of "Get Your Money's Worth."

Toward the north, the most conspicuous object was an enormous, upright box, towering blackly against a sky that now caught a faint flush of dark red from the east. This was a grain elevator; and he wondered, in his subconscious efforts to pass the time, whether or not it was higher than the Masonic Temple. After making about twenty turns, occupying, as it seemed to him, the space of an hour, he again took out his watch, and discovered that only five minutes had passed away. Thus does time crawl when one is waiting. The feeling that he was getting chilly, perhaps catching cold, was gradually asserting itself. It became a conviction when his eyes chanced to light upon the sign of a steamboat company advertising cheap excursions to summer resorts, to Macatawa Park and Ottawa Beach. A saloon on the opposite corner, whose windows were gaudy with circles and other figures in colored glass, attracted his attention.

"I'll take a hot scotch while I'm waiting," he soliloquized. Crossing the street, he ordered the drink. The place was deliciously warm, and a negro in a white jacket was just lifting a brightly-polished brass cover from a pot that contained some-

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thing that smoked and emitted an appetizing smell. Two or three nondescripts were standing about the place, and a stout woman with red cheeks, a big nose and bold eyes, looked out at him from a little room where she was sitting at a table. She wore a seal coat and a large hat trimmed with red flowers. The young man glanced at her with the good-natured yet not encouraging look of the experienced person who is so sure of his ground that he is not afraid to be friendly. As he cooled his scotch with the little spoon and sipped it slowly, he addressed a remark or two to the barkeeper with so much good-fellowship that pleasant relations were immediately established. Two or three times he went to the door and looked out.

"I've got a date with a friend," he explained. "I was to meet him at six o'clock at the corner of State and South Water."

"Him?" laughed the barkeeper.

"Him?—Oh, ha! ha! I'm on now. Sure thing. Friend of mine—we're going over the bridge together to Ma'am Galli's to have dinner. Ever been?"

"Ma'am Galli's? Seems to me I've heard of the place. It's that Italian restaurant, ain't it?"

"Yes, that's it—the only place in town to get

spaghetti. Cook it just as they do in Italy—sort of a Bohemian place.”

“Bohemian? I thought it was I-talian,” replied the barkeeper.

The young man looked out of the door again and, calling, “There’s my friend now—so long,” went into the street.

It was typical of the city’s spirit that neither the barkeeper nor the negro looked after him to see whether or not he had been waiting for a man. In a country town every person in the place would have been agog with curiosity; but here nobody cared. Harry Chapin, employed in Blodgett & Blodgett’s real estate office, had indeed an engagement to take dinner at Ma’am Galli’s with Edward Crissey, lawyer. The latter came walking briskly down the street now, holding his head high and throwing out his athlete’s chest.

“Hello, old man,” he called as he espied Chapin hastening toward him; “been taking an appetizer? You should have waited till we got over to the madam’s, where you could have got something good—if all you tell me about the place is true.”

The men were walking north now together.

“I was taking a hot scotch,” explained Chapin. “I got here a quarter of an hour early and came

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near getting chilled through. I saw the sun set, though, right at the foot of South Water Street. It looked exactly like a fire. It seemed as though you could have sent an engine right down to it."

They were on the bridge now, and both involuntarily glanced down the river, flowing in the bed of a cañon whose walls were the faces of dark red buildings. The air was a bluish gray, almost black. There was a red glow in the west, faint but angry.

"Look's cold, doesn't it?" observed Crissey, pointing to the surface of the river, where blocks of blue-gray ice were floating. The waters were the color of absinthe after dilution. Sailing craft of all sizes were tied to the wharf, and a steamer or two was frozen fast. The masts looked like trunks of dead trees in a frozen world.

"That's a great ad," observed Chapin, pointing to an electric sign that blazed far off at the right against the sky as though it were the wall of Nebuchadnezzar's palace. Alas! there was no sublimity written by the finger of God there. Every night that sign blazes out as inevitably as a galaxy of stars, spelling the name of a famous brand of cider.

"It isn't a marker to that, though," responded the lawyer, indicating a board that swayed and creaked



over the door of a red brick saloon. The board displayed the legend, "A raw or boiled egg with every drink."

"Uh, it takes my appetite away," exclaimed Chapin. They were in the region of "home" restaurants, where dinner was always "now ready," and of fifteen-cent eating houses. Turning down a side street, they came to a gloomy-looking brick house, into the door of which Chapin turned and bounded up the steps with the sureness of familiarity.

"Where you taking me, old man?" asked Crissey. "This is no restaurant."

Chapin twisted a silver knob in the middle of the door, and a bell rang on the inside.

"Ma'am Galli doesn't dare put a sign out," he explained. "She has more people than she can feed as it is."

A thin-faced waiter with red eyes and a mustache resembling a worn-out toothbrush, and wearing a dirty apron, opened the door wide enough to make a little crack, into which he put his nose.

"Did you telephone?" he asked. Then, as soon as he recognized Chapin, he threw the door wide, crying, "Oh, Mr. Chapin, come een! This ees your friend?"

"Sure thing! Where's our seats, Chito?"

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"Right here, reserved. Right where you sat the last time."

While he was taking off his coat, Crissey glanced about with keen, dark eyes, alert with mingled curiosity and amusement. He was in the rear room of what had once been large double parlors. The sliding doors were now removed, making one long hall of respectable size. In each room was a table capable of seating thirty-five or forty people. The covers were already laid, and nearly all the chairs were turned about, showing that the seats were reserved. Some hooks for coats, a sideboard, a dilapidated lounge, and a new piano constituted the entire furnishing of the restaurant, which was dimly lighted, and warmed by means of two fireplaces. The curtains at the windows were dingy from the soot-coal smoke, but the open fires and the heaping dishes of apples, bananas and oranges upon the white table-cloths gave the place a cheerful look.

"Isn't this the stuff?" said Chapin cheerfully as he returned from hanging up the coats.

"This is all right," assented Crissey, taking out his watch. "But when do we begin to eat? I'm as hungry as a dog now. It's half-past six."

"We don't really get to work before seven," replied Chapin. "Have a drink?"

"No, thanks; I don't believe I will—not if we've got another half-hour to wait before feeding."

The doorbell was ringing with great frequency now, and the guests were arriving rapidly, singly and in little groups. Chito was omnipresent, dancing about, appearing and disappearing as limply and as jerkingly as a marionette. He opened the door; he brought in things for the table; he helped some tip-producing guest to take off his coat. There was a marked effort on the part of those arriving to be truly Bohemian. They were mostly respectable business men or clerks in business offices. The women were, in the majority of cases, wives accompanied by their own husbands; yet there was a pervading sense that herein was to be found the real thing so far as Bohemia was concerned. Many of the ladies did not know exactly what Bohemia is, but they had a vague idea that it is a place where people eat spaghetti, and conduct themselves in a free and easy manner. A white-haired sculptor who dined regularly at the place satisfied the ideals of those who believed Bohemia to be a land frequented by artists, authors and other such delightful and irresponsible folk. Three or four mysterious characters, and two Levantines who talked Italian with the sculptor,

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and French with any of the guests who knew a few words of the language, verified by their presence the rumor that all classes mingled freely at Ma'am Galli's, and that French and Italian were the principal tongues spoken there.

"Bravo, Chito; bravo!" cried Chapin, clapping his hands. The other guests joined in the applause of the waiter, who now appeared with an armful of chianti bottles, containing cheap California wine, which he proceeded to set on the table, one bottle at each plate.

"I take it that the dinner hour is not far off now," sighed Crissey.

"The soup'll come next," prophesied Chapin.

"Is there *raviola*?" inquired anxiously some person who had in all probability been searching his memory for the name during the past ten minutes. To be able to enjoy queer dishes is also supposed to be a Bohemian earmark.

"Not to-night." The owner of the voice simulated despair.

"*Tourtas*?" asked another guest.

"*Si, signor.*"

"Good! Good!" shouted half a dozen enthusiastically.

"You see what sort of a place it is," whispered Chapin triumphantly. "Isn't this Bohemian,

though? And just wait till you taste the spaghetti! Hello, there's Hutchins. He's the best ever, and so's his wife."

Frank Hutchins and Fred Bird, espying Chapin, called out, "Ah there, Harry!" and came over to the fireplace. Hutchins was a large man, with the face of a middle-aged Apollo and the stomach of a valiant trencherman of sedentary habits. He had acquired the stomach at an athletic club famous for its mixed drinks and its course dinners. Bird was also a corpulent gentleman, whose bald and shining forehead added to his general rotund effect. Both were noted good fellows and good livers, so beaming with friendliness that no one ever gave a thought to their intellectual gifts, which were in reality not inconsiderable. Hutchins, especially, was a rare judge of bourbon, and had never been known to say an unkind word about anybody. Chapin introduced Crissey, and Bird and Hutchins each proposed an appetizer. Crissey assented, mentally reflecting that dinner must surely be nearly ready by this time.

"Ma'am Galli has some very decent Maryland reserve," explained Hutchins, pointing to the converted bookcase in the corner. Crissey observed that there was a formidable array of foreign-looking bottles behind the glass door—chianti and ver-

mouth flasks, stone jugs, and fat liqueur bottles—but that the object which Chito most frequently brought forth was a familiar-looking receptacle containing plain American whisky.

"Here come the girls," said Hutchins, as the wives appeared, accompanied by a young woman of striking beauty. Mrs. Bird was in full evening dress. It was said that she was insanely devoted to her husband, and that he was as proud of her shoulders as though they had been hewn out of Carrara by Story and had cost ten thousand dollars. Her hair was light and fluffy, and a diamond star glittered in its meshes. Mrs. Hutchins was slender and willowy. She wore a green street dress and a green hat ornamented with fur. She was vivacious by both nature and art.

"Come girls, get into the game here, get into the game!" cried Hutchins, as Chito brought the whisky bottle and set it down on the table before the party. Chapin was introduced to Miss Aikin, and Crissey was presented to Miss Aikin and to Mrs. Bird. Otherwise, all were acquainted. Mrs. Hutchins ordered ginger ale. Mrs. Bird and Miss Aikin both declined anything intoxicating, professedly because they were in a public place, really for fear of making their noses red.

Chito came in holding at arm's length a bowl of

steaming soup. He received a general ovation. The Hutchins party took their places at the table, and it was regarded a great piece of good fortune that these were contiguous to those of Chapin and Crissey. Mrs. Hutchins moved everybody round so that Miss Aikin and Chapin sat together at her left hand.

"You two are the only unmarried ones here," she explained. "You can sit together, but I am going to keep you right here under my wing."

"Be careful or she'll have you married before you get out of the place," shouted Bird, looking down the line. "She's a notorious match-maker."

Chapin glanced at his companion with marked admiration. "She won't have to work overtime on me," he replied gallantly.

"See Nellie blush," giggled Mrs. Bird.

The girl would have been a bold character if the color had not mounted to her face, for she became aware that the eyes of the dozen or fifteen strangers seated opposite were fixed upon her in furtive admiration. She was indeed a woman of striking and unusual beauty. No longer in her first youth, she verified the fact, well known among connoisseurs, that a woman reaches the acme of loveliness when her charms are mature. She wore a dress of golden brown, a color that she affected as harmon-

izing with her red-gold hair, which was her crowning physical adornment. This was very long, and she wound it about on top of her head in braids in a coronet effect. Her face and features were rather small, but her hair prevented them from looking insignificant. Her complexion was warm, and there were a few tiny freckles on her nose and cheeks. She had hazel eyes, with a reddish gleam in them, and yellow-brown eyelashes. An explosive laugh, which never betrayed her into opening her mouth very wide, not even when, as now, it was provoked partly by nervousness, exhibited to the world a marvelous set of teeth—white, not too large, and evenly placed. Her nose and lips were a trifle fleshy, suggesting not so much a sensual streak, as probable plumpness in her graceful, tailor-made figure.

"Cheese in your soup?" asked Chapin, attentively dipping a spoon into a saucer of grated parmesan and holding it toward Nellie's plate. She hesitated a moment, but Harry assured her that it was the "proper caper"; and she murmured, "A little, thank you," convinced that cheese in soup was Bohemian, though from any other point of view she would have refused it as an outlandish mess.

"How disgustingly these foreigners eat soup!" whispered Mrs. Bird to Crissey, as a high, thin,



sipping sound was heard in various portions of the room.

"That's nothing," volunteered Chapin, who had heard the remark. "Wait till they begin on spaghetti!"

"Oh, dear, I don't know what I shall do about the spaghetti!" exclaimed Mrs. Bird. "I can't eat it in the regular foreign way. It slips out of my mouth as fast as I put it in."

"Remember what I told you about cutting it up," said her husband; "these people here will think you have never been out of town if you cut up your spaghetti."

The table in the front parlor had been taken entirely by some social club from Evanston. The party included two or three young girls who, in the words of Chapin, were having the "time of their lives." A good young man, of the exemplary type so common in that suburb, was smoking a cigarette between the soup and the next course, with the air of a genuine cosmopolitan. One of the girls was gazing at him with undisguised wonder and an expression that said plainer than words, "I hate a goody-goody man!"

Crissey, who had not found anything to say yet, was catching scraps of conversation from the babble that was going on at his own table. The white-

haired sculptor was talking about the grand opera with an excitable dark woman at his left, assuring her in French, with many gestures, that something or other was "man's music." A little Jew, with red eyes and a projecting under lip so drawn down at the corners that it pulled the skin tight over his cheek bones, was attempting to draw Frank Hutchins into conversation across the table on the subject of socialism, which he introduced apropos of nothing. For the rest, they all seemed to be talking of various ways to cook spaghetti and of different places in Europe where they had eaten it. Those who were not talking were looking at Mrs. Bird, whose décolleté costume was due to the fact that she was giving a box party at the theater. Many of the men present had hitherto gained their only idea of woman in full dress from the variety stage, and the wax figures in the show windows of the department stores. When the spaghetti arrived, Hutchins, Bird and Chapin helped themselves to twice as much as they wanted, and actually ate the enormous heaps upon their plates with the zest of those who have acquired the truly Bohemian appetite. Crissey, who was a stanch American, cut up his portions into little bits, a precedent which was followed by Mrs. Bird and Mrs. Hutchins. Chapin gave Nellie instructions in spaghetti-eating.

"I can't suck it up like that," she giggled. "Everybody is looking at me."

"Nonsense," replied Harry. "In a Bohemian place like this, nobody minds what you do."

"But it makes a woman so ugly to pucker up her mouth like that. Just look at the woman down at the end of the table."

"That's different again," replied Harry. "You can't judge by her. She didn't start even with you."

"She took twice as much as I did."

"Oh, I didn't mean on spaghetti; I meant on looks."

"How are you getting on down there?" cried Hutchins cheerfully, glancing down the line. "Break away! Break away!"

"Don't bother 'em," whispered his wife; "they're so interested in each other!"

"You stick your fork in it like this," explained Chapin, "and whirl it round and round until you have a little ball, which you put into your mouth like this."

"Of course," he continued a minute or two later, "if there's a string or two that don't twist up, you can bite it off."

"What a romantic-looking man your friend is," murmured Nellie, glancing up from her plate after

having performed quite successfully the difficult gastronomic feat. "Such heavy white hair makes a young man look so romantic. Has Mr. Crissey ever had any great trouble?"

"Crissey romantic!" exclaimed Harry. "Listen." The lawyer was talking to a man who had called out to him from the other side of the table:—"I see by the morning papers that the committee want you to run for alderman against Badenough—"

"They do me the honor of saying that I am the only man in my ward who can defeat Badenough, but they want me to contribute two thousand dollars to the campaign fund. This I refuse to do. If they really believe that I am the only available man, then I should have the support of the machine without being called upon to put up. I am willing to do my part toward overthrowing the corrupt ring which is now in power, but I have not sufficient means to risk two thousand dollars on a political gamble. I am not so ready to put up money for a public office as are some of those already in power. Lacking their experience, I can not see wherein the position of alderman should be one of such pecuniary value."

There was a faint ripple of applause from all parts of the room. Crissey, who was regarded as a

jury lawyer of great promise, had a way of saying commonplaces in a convincing and stately manner. He was a self-centered man, with an evident purpose in life. The little Jew immediately addressed him on the subject of socialism.

"Is he married?" asked Nellie.

"Sure," replied Harry, in a tone of evident exultation, "and has a whole houseful of children—regular private kindergarten. That's why you never see his wife with him, I suppose. She has to stay at home and take care of the kids."

This remark sounded a little disloyal to Harry himself, but somehow he was nettled by the interest which this stunning girl was taking in his friend. Not that he could blame her particularly, after all, for Edward Crissey was one of the men whom women look at. His hair was snowy white, as Nellie had observed, but its glossy abundance and the clear red of his cheeks gave him a youthful expression. His face was clean-shaven, and distinctly forceful and intellectual. Nellie's furtive but photographic glance had taken in a large mouth, thin lips, dark eyes and eyelashes, a prominent Roman nose, a pair of square, strong shoulders—on the whole, the face and figure of a man who was in the world to win his way and to command respect.

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"She's one of the unknown wives of unknown husbands," murmured Nellie, her mind still dwelling on Harry's last bit of information.

The latter laughed immoderately, repeating the expression.

"That's good," he said; and then, anxious to make amends for his slight disloyalty, "but he won't be unknown long. Edward Crissey is a coming man. He's a man of destiny. Nothing can stop him. He and I went to school together when we were boys. He started out from a little boy to be a great man—used to say that he would be president of the United States some day."

"He looks eloquent," observed Nellie.

"He is. He can say, 'It's a pleasant day,' in such a way that you'll feel as if it was pleasant just to oblige you, you know—but that's good—'unknown wives of unknown men!'" The tame remark seemed the very essence of wit to Harry.

The Birds and the Hutchinses left early, taking Nellie with them. Harry helped the girl into her coat, one of the long, loose, nightgown-like garments so fashionable at the time, and handed her her hat, golden brown and trimmed with a brown pheasant's wing flecked with yellow spots.

"We're going to see Blanche Bates," called out Bird. "I'd ask you to come along, but my carriage

won't hold another. Nellie will have to sit on my lap, as it is."

"No, on mine," said Hutchins. "I've got first call!"

"We've had a delightful time!" said Mrs. Bird.

"So Bohemian!" added Nellie.

"You must all come to my house next Friday night," put in Mrs. Hutchins. "We'll have some music, and a Dutch lunch at midnight."

"That'll be Bohemian, too!" cried Harry; and, pulling Mrs. Hutchins by the arm, he whispered, "Will Miss Aikin be there?"

"Yes, if you'll promise to come; and you can go out in the kitchen together and make potato salad." And then aloud, "I appoint Miss Aikin and Mr. Chapin a committee of two to make the potato salad."

"Hear! Hear!" cried Hutchins.

"Will you come, Mr. Crissey, and bring Mrs. Crissey?" asked the prospective hostess.

"I should be delighted to accept of your charming hospitality," replied Crissey, "but I am so busy now with political matters and an important suit that I have not an evening to myself. And just now Mrs. Crissey has two sick children on her hands—nothing serious, nothing serious—earache for the three-year-old and teeth in the case of the

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baby, so that the poor woman is little less than a prisoner. I'm away from home to-night simply because I did not want to trouble her to have dinner ready, and I have a committee to see in half an hour now."

"She's as witty as she is beautiful," declared Charin, handing Crissey an imported Panatela, after the others had gone. "Such a woman as that is enough to drive a man to matrimony."

"I should hardly have been able to get on without my wife," mused Crissey, blowing a long, thin feather of smoke toward the ceiling.

The people from Evanston left early, shortly after Crissey's departure, the good young man from the suburbs remarking that he hated to throw away his cigarette, and the sweet girl murmuring, "I've had a perfectly lovely time—the place is so Bohemian."

Then the regular *habitués* began the evening's fun. The queer-shaped, foreign-looking bottles in the converted bookcase were brought out, and strange drinks were concocted. The excitable, dark woman gave a recitation, taking advantage of the rhetorical pauses to puff vigorously at her cigarette. Some of the guests ran out into the kitchen to hobnob with Ma'am Galli and to cajole extra cups of coffee out of her. The whole company sang "We'll Hang Willie Smith to a Sour Apple Tree," and



bombarded that gentleman, who was the editor of a hydrophobic and moribund weekly, with bread balls. A tall girl, with big, yearning eyes and the face of the Sistine Madonna, went over to the piano and sang a parody on "Ah Want My Black Baby Back," in which the word "baby" was put in the possessive case and there was a reference to cold feet. Harry and several other of the men gathered around her and demanded a whole repertoire of "coon" songs. One of the Levantines shut the doors between the two parlors, and a game of poker was soon in full swing. But Harry left while the evening was still promising. The girl at the piano had lost her Bohemian charm for him: her voice sounded raucous, and her wit had become stale. Bidding the jolly, thoughtless company good night, he went down into the squalid street. There was the chill, acrid smell in the air of the first hour after midnight, and a few nervous and anemic stars were glittering in the sky far above the housetops.

## CHAPTER II

### IMPARTIAL ADVICE

The evening at the Hutchins' flat on the South Side was a very pleasant occasion for Harry, and served to make more insistent and agreeable than ever the image of the girl with the red-gold hair and the yellow-brown eyelashes. He mixed the potato salad with her, and that incorrigible match-maker, Mrs. Hutchins, took care that they should have the kitchen to themselves for a good half hour. There was much chatter about the amount of olive oil and vinegar, and a playful struggle for a big wooden spoon. Once, when they were standing close together looking into a bowl, Nellie's red-gold hair brushed Harry's cheek and gave him a thrill which recurred afterward as often as he thought of the circumstance. He waked up in the middle of the night several times to think of Nellie, and he was thinking of her now as he stood in the door of his lodgings on Evanston Avenue on the North Side.

It was a frame cottage with a large garden in

the rear, and Harry was the only lodger, occupying a large front room upstairs and an alcove bedroom. His landlady was a cheerful German woman with one daughter, a grass-widow who gave music lessons, and taught German in a private school. Harry was most comfortable there. In winter the fire was lighted in his stove every morning at six. The house was old-fashioned, and the room was thoroughly warmed before he arose. He had a well-stocked sideboard, and gave an occasional card party to his men friends, on which occasions there was no lack of conviviality. Though he was only a moderate smoker, there was a great show of smoking paraphernalia in his room; pipes everywhere, cigars ostentatiously displayed in a glass box with a silver top, and an idiotic little table with three legs and a number of set receptacles—one of those gift articles which are of no earthly use, but which haunt the unhappy recipient till his death. Harry often had his coffee in bed; and good coffee it was, too, for the old lady made it herself. If he arose sufficiently early, he ate his breakfast with the buxom music teacher. His lunch and dinner were always eaten down town, at one or another of several resorts where there was plenty of good cheer and hale fellowship.

Harry himself was not a youth of extraordinary

endowments, either physical or mental. He was tall, slender, and thin-chested; his mother had used to call him "chicken-breasted." His face was thin, dark and sallow; and he wore large eyeglasses, to counteract a weakness induced by working by electric light and sitting up late o' nights in a cloud of tobacco smoke. His forehead was somewhat narrow and high, an effect which was augmented by a slight promise of baldness in front. His hair and eyes were black, and he had a vivacious way, as though he were always about to tell a joke or say something bright—thus arousing a hope which never quite materialized. Yet he had a slangy, up-to-date way of saying things which often brought applause, and he was so manifestly gregarious and light-hearted that he was greeted as a boon companion whenever he appeared in any company. Perhaps, had he really possessed a trenchant wit or unusual force of character, he would have had fewer friends. His popularity was due partly to the fact that the rank and file of his acquaintance felt him to be one of themselves.

"It's going to be pleasant after all," he muttered, as a sickly ray of sun struggled through the vast billows of clouds, black and smoky-white, with which the March sky was piled. "I guess spring has sprung." And a faint image of his mother took

form in his brain and faded out again, for this had been a favorite expression of hers.

There had been several days of summer warmth and a drizzling rain, which had caused the snow to vanish from the streets, leaving only surly spots of ice here and there by the walk. But during the night it had snowed again, and the earth was marked with mangy patches of white and brown. The branches of an oak tree opposite the house were bare, save for a cluster of dead yellow leaves that had hung on all winter, and silver tears of dew were dripping from the brown twigs. A bird somewhere in the distance called out a little flurry of clear notes, and the sun flashed brightly through an opening of clouds.

Harry stepped briskly down the street, whistling "I Guess I'll Have to Telegraph My Baby." At the "limits" barns he met Gehrke, his landlady's grocer, a prosperous, well-fed, amiable bachelor of German descent. Harry and Gehrke belonged to the same suburban bowling club.

"Good morning, Harry," cried the latter; "are you going to ride on the grip?"

"Sure; you couldn't get me inside on a day like this."

"Well, I guess the backbone of winter is broke," observed Mr. Gehrke, sniffing the keen air that yet

had a balmy smell. "Smoke up? I buy these by the box. They're a mild, sweet smoke."

"Thanks," said Harry, accepting with considerable secret trepidation but much outward eagerness the thick yellow weed.

"Oh, we'll have skating clean out to the crib yet," he ventured, lighting the cigar.

The two men lapsed into silence for a while. Talking is difficult on the lumbering, antiquated cars which the North-siders dignify by the name of transportation.

As Harry puffed away at the cigar, which, being absolutely without character, was not so aggressively offensive as he had feared, he noted his progress by means of certain signs which had attracted his attention every morning for years, and which served as milestones on his way to his office, invariably arousing the same train of thought in his mind—subconsciously when he chanced to be engaged in conversation.

"Scroggs' Million Dollar Rheumatic Cure" made him think of a pretty girl whom he had once met at a summer resort on the St. Joe, and who told him that her mother had gone to town for some of this same cure. The "Dew Drop Inn" called to his mind a friend in the shoe business who once started

out to cure a cold by drinking Medford rum and molasses, and who was not seen again for a week. The last heard of him was in the "Dew Drop Inn." The name of "Sees's" in written characters across a large plate-glass window aroused the reflection that milliners with such foreign-sounding names were doubtless more expensive than others. A familiar-looking hat in the window sent the blood back to his heart and made him feel again the touch of red-gold hair against his cheek.

"What became of that girl you were making up to, Gehrke?" he shouted to his companion. "Did she give you the icy mit?"

Gehrke began talking volubly, as a man does who is approached on a subject that lies much in his thoughts.

"It was like this," he said. "If I go to work and make up to a girl, my mother and brothers throw it in to me till I am ashamed to go into the house. They guy the life out of me. You see, my mother don't want me to get married and go off and live by myself. She always commences the racket, and the boys follow suit. I can't stand that—to have anybody throw it in to me. She was a peach, all right, that girl was," he sighed reflectively.

How much depends upon the form of expression!

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That sigh and that homely phrase, translated into other language, might have conveyed the idea of a heart tragedy.

"Why don't you marry her yet?" asked Harry, still thinking of the red-gold hair. "Don't you intend to get married some day?"

"You bet I do," cried Gehrke, shouting hoarsely in his companion's ear and talking as rapidly as possible when the car stopped at the corners.

"You see, it's like this: If I want to sleep late in the mornings, mother comes in and wakes me and says, 'Get up, Theo, the girl wants to make up the room.' Then on Sunday morning, if I lay in bed late, what do my father and brothers do? They go to work and use up all the hot water to take a bath with. And if I get tired of this and go to work and make up to a girl, then my whole family go to work and throw it in to me."

When Mr. Gehrke became excited, he repeated with remarkable frequency the expression "go to work," as well as the main statements of his discourse.

The smell of tobacco from a factory in the vicinity of Division Street reminded Harry that he was half-way down town, and he looked at his watch to see if he was going to be late at his office.

"How much of an income does a man need to get



married on?" he asked his companion. His own salary was thirty dollars a week.

"You see, it's like this," replied Gehrke. "If a man goes to work and marries a girl that's no good—that wants to live on pie and fried steak and wear electric seal sacques, and go to the matinee every week, but don't know how to boil water—then he's getting the little end, unless he's rich. But if he goes to work and marries a good, sensible girl, who'll be a help to him, then he can live cheaper and better married than single."

"I guess that's no lie either," said Harry, unconsciously adapting his style to his companion's mental caliber.

"Now there's my clerk, Tom," continued Gehrke. "He's a boy of education—been through the high school. It's different with him from what it is with me. I could afford to keep a hired girl, though if the girl should go to work and leave, I'd want my fried steak just the same when I came home at night, and my wife 'ud have to go to work and get it. But Tom he don't want to marry a hired girl, and none of the girls that he knows are willing to begin at the bottom with him and help work up. Their fathers are well off, and all they have to do is to set around and play the piano and let their mothers or the hired girls wash the dishes."

This conversation, on the whole, was not very satisfying to Harry. He found time to revert to it occasionally during the morning's work in the office, and the only conclusion to which he could arrive was that Gehrke was in favor of matrimony for himself, but that he advised a young man on a salary to be very careful in the selection of a mate.

"Of course, if a man had an independent business like Gehrke," he reflected, "he could just keep a wife as a sort of luxury, like. It's all a lottery," he sighed, taking refuge in one of those proverbs which do automatic thinking for uncreative men.

At noon he hurried into his coat and hat and went over to Crissey's office in the Unity Building. He found him just locking his door preparatory to going out. They lunched together in an underground restaurant of good repute for its roast beef and beer.

"Been to Ma'am Galli's since?" asked Chapin, over the cigars.

"No," replied Crissey. "I don't often take my supper down town, you know."

"Didn't you think Mrs. Bird was a stunner?" asked Chapin after a little.

"She is certainly a very beautiful woman," replied Crissey, "and knows how to make the most of her charms."

"She's not a marker to Miss Aikin, though," blurted out Chapin awkwardly. "You made a terrible mash there, old man, with your blamed white hair and red cheeks."

"Nonsense," replied Crissey. "You were the one, with your spaghetti lessons. When a fellow gets far enough along to give a girl lessons in eating spaghetti, there's no chance for anybody else. And, anyhow, I'm not in the market."

"I wouldn't be in it for a minute if you were," sighed Chapin. "I'd be an also ran. I say, old man, how much does a chap really need to get married on? To get along all right, you know?"

Crissey took the question most seriously. He had a sympathetic turn which, in after years, was accounted the main secret of his success.

"So!" he exclaimed. "It has gone that far?"

"I haven't said a word to her," replied Chapin. "I don't suppose she'd look at me. Some millionaire would be about right for her. But if I should hit it off with her, could a man and woman live on thirty dollars a week? I'd ask her in a minute," he cried excitedly, "if I thought I had enough money to keep her right. Such a woman as that ought to be dressed in silk every day. She ought to walk around on Turkish rugs and have nothing to do but read Ouida."

"If she's the right kind of woman, though, she'll want to do her share. As for the amount of salary necessary for making matrimony a success, I should say that thirty dollars is ample to begin with. Why, my own income sometimes doesn't amount to so much even now," lowering his voice, "yet my wife manages to make it come out even, always, and I am never harassed with bills. We have children, too. But my wife is a wonderful woman. I hardly know how I should get along without her, or how, in fact, I could get along with any other woman. Some women are extravagant, some are inefficient, some are sick all the time, and the majority are always jealous—bothering the life out of a man with questions if he is not home at a certain hour, and poking into his business affairs to see if they can not get on the track of some other woman. My wife runs her end of the machine, and I run mine; and she's always cheerful, brave, equal to anything. You wouldn't think there could be so much strength and courage in such a little thing. I never would have believed it myself if I had not experienced it. Sometimes when I come home tired, she greets me with a restful smile, and I suspect that she's really more tired than I am. As for thirty dollars, that's princely for a start. We didn't

have over ten on the average—Dolly and I didn't—when we got married. I never knew how much you could get out of ten dollars a week until I got married. You can get hope with it, old man, and a kingdom where you are king, with a queen for consort—and peace and counsel and strength."

Chapin was leaning forward with his elbows on the table, looking at the speaker with burning eyes.

"Then you believe in marriage," he said, hoarsely. "You advise me, as a friend, to go into it—that is, if she will?"

"Believe in it? I believe it's a man's only chance for happiness on earth. Of course, my wife is an exceptional woman, but then—"

"There are others," interrupted Chapin, loyally. "Miss Aikin is an angel; anybody could see that by just looking at her. Didn't you notice that, Ed?"

"Why, the fact is, I didn't observe her very carefully. I did notice that she was a very sweet and attractive girl," he hastened to add, an impatient move on Harry's part indicating that the latter was offended. "You see, the truth is that I have no eyes for the women at all. I've settled the woman question, so far as I am concerned."

"Miss Aikin is a woman of intellect, too," continued Harry. "Reads Browning and Omar Khay-

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yam. Such a woman would be a companion to a man. Don't you think such a woman would be a companion to a man?"

"Certainly, my boy, certainly," replied Crissey, with conviction. "The best kind of a companion—the sweetest, truest, best sort of a chum imaginable."

"I'll do it!" cried Harry, "if she will. Maybe she won't look at me, but I'll put up a front. A man never knows what he can do until he puts up front enough. I'll begin a campaign—by the way, how's your campaign for alderman coming along?"

"Oh, that's all off for the present," laughed Crissey. "I refused to contribute a thousand dollars and to make a canvass of the saloons. You see, there are a number of all-night saloons in my ward—tough joints—and it would be necessary for me to make them all sorts of promises. I couldn't afford to do that," he said, with a far-away look in his eyes, as of a man gazing into the future and seeing something, "for I have to make a clean record."

"Well, good luck to you, old man," said Crissey earnestly, as they shook hands on the sidewalk at the top of the stairs. Then each went his own way through the sunless street, pigmies at the foot of the tremendous, grimy buildings, atoms in the throngs of hurrying thousands that dodged and

darted along in either direction, with eager, care-drawn, joyless faces. Harry with the old primeval yearning in his heart and the thrill of a fluff of red-gold hair in his veins; Crissey with his confident tread and his dark eyes looking into the future.

## CHAPTER III

### BEHIND THE SCENES

"You're a chump, Nell," said Carrie Vinne, Miss Aikin's roommate. "Mr. Crawford is a perfect gentleman, and so is his friend."

"What's his friend's name?" asked Nellie.

"I don't know—I can't remember—sort of a German-sounding name—Bloom, I think. He's in the brewery business. He's the loveliest young fellow, with the sweetest blond mustache and such a killing way. He wears such swell clothes, too."

"He wants to go with you, doesn't he?" asked Nellie, interested in spite of herself.

"No! He wouldn't have to ask me twice. Old Crawford wants me. Why, there's no harm in it, Nell, with him along. He's old enough to be the father to either of us. I always call him 'papa.' He's as gray as a rat and looks as pious as a Presbyterian deacon. Oh, come on, Nell."

Nellie sighed. "No," she replied with determination. "It might be pleasant, but there's nothing in



that sort of thing for me. I was brought up too strict, in the first place. Besides, there's nothing in it. My only hope to get out of drudgery is to get married. I'm sick of standing all day in the store and of living cramped up in a little room. I can't afford to do anything that will hurt my reputation. Is Crawford a single man?"

"No; but his wife is awful mean to him. He doesn't love her at all. He isn't happy at home. I feel real sorry for him."

"Is this other fellow—the one with the blond mustache—is he married?"

"I don't know," replied Carrie, with some impatience. "But what difference does it make? You're too particular. We're just going out for a little pleasure, and you'll break up the party by not going. Mr. Crawford says his friend is terribly fascinated with you, and it was to bring you two together that he got up the party."

The girls were talking of a projected automobile trip to a wayside inn, noted for the accommodating nature of its host. Mr. Crawford, the gray-haired gentleman whose saintly appearance should have been sufficient guaranty for the respectability of any sort of excursion, was interested in automobiles and was fast amassing a fortune. His young friend, whose name was in fact Bloom, was connected by

marriage with a brewery. He had taken to wife the eldest daughter of the secretary of the company, an unprepossessing lady whose devotion had become tiresome to him.

Miss Aikin was an ambitious young lady in poor circumstances. Her room, wherein the conversation above recorded took place, was a back bedroom on Erie Street. Its one window looked out upon a mansard roof, beyond which was a dirty alley. Upon the roof were generally to be seen a few scraps of paper, a banana peel or two, perhaps a toothless comb, a few floating ribs from a corset, or an empty beer bottle. If she opened the door or the transom, her nostrils were invaded by a smell of past generations of lodgers and of surreptitious meals in bedrooms; this odor mingled with years of family cooking in the nether regions, of cabbage, parsnips, German sours and boiled turnips. But who can describe the peculiar odor that pertains to the hall of a lodging house? Composed of a thousand different perfumes, and mingled in varying proportions, the result, after a sufficient lapse of time, is always identical, and can never be mistaken by one who has once smelled it. This odor is, in fact, a sort of composite record of the industries which have been carried on within. A rear view of Miss Aikin's lodg-

ing house revealed a half-filled milk bottle standing here and there on a window sill, an occasional tumbler covered with a tea-saucer, and, in one instance, a long pair of black stockings, hung for drying in the wind by the simple process of shutting the window down upon their tops. Miss Aikin now added to this array by plastering against the pane a handkerchief which she had just been washing at the stationary stand in the closet. Then she walked over and sat on the open folding bed. She seemed to be sitting in a shallow square box, with her legs hanging over the side. Nellie was attired in faded blue kimono, which permitted, as she sat down, a glimpse of her black union suit. As she walked across the room, it was evident to her admiring roommate, who had often remarked upon the fact, that her figure, when she was dressed, was partly the work of God, partly that of woman. She had fine hips and shoulders, and she was a trifle sway-backed—just enough for symmetry. Her breast was flat, however, and her foot, as one of her slippers now dropped off, was distinctly ugly. The swollen joint gave a triangular line, and testified to the effect of vain and painful shoes. Pulling the pins from her hair, she dropped it down her back, running her hands through it at the temples and shaking her head.

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"Gee, Nell, but your hair is fine!" cried Miss Vinne. She was standing at the glass, combing out her own scanty blond locks, and carefully tucking the combings into a black bag which hung by the puckering string to one side of the mirror frame.

Miss Aikin began to comb her own hair leisurely, an occupation to which she devoted nearly an hour each day, and to which she attributed in part its luxuriance and gloss. Strange to say, as soon as she dropped her wavy and red-gold tresses down on each side of her face, her expression changed, and her beauty in great measure departed. Her features, small in any case, became noticeably so, and took on a peaked and shrewd expression. Her face, looking from its enframing hair, was strangely suggestive of a rat peeping from a hole.

"They say kerosene's good to keep the hair from falling out," remarked Carrie, as she rolled another straw-colored ball around her finger and tucked it into the bag, a provision for the inevitable time when a switch or a "front" would become a necessity. "But it smells so," she added. "Do you remember the time when I tried it? Gee! I couldn't go down to the store for three days. I sent word that I was sick, but old Baldy docked me the whole time I was away."

"Why don't you try vaseline?" asked Nellie. "They say it's made from kerosene, and it doesn't smell."

"Did you ever see that fellow again that you met at that swell lady's on the South Side?" asked Carrie, lighting the gas to heat her curling irons, a favorite implement with ladies of disappearing locks. "Gee! I'll bet you're mashed on him, Nell!" and she looked solemnly at her companion.

"Don't say 'gee' so much, Carrie," remonstrated Nellie, picking up the scissors and holding a wisp of her hair before her eyes that she might scan it for split ends. "It isn't refined or ladylike. No, I'm not. I'm not so soft. I'm not going to make a fool of myself over anybody. I'm going to marry some nice fellow who can give me a home and take care of me. There's nothing in falling in love with some fellow who can not take care of you, and there's nothing in running around with married men. They give you a nice time once or twice, and then they insult you."

"Papa never insulted me," observed Carrie, wiping the iron on a piece of paper. "He'd better not. He knows I'd bounce him in no time. And don't talk to me about marriage, either. Marriage is a failure—working for a brute of a man who doesn't love you any more, and for a houseful of kids!

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Look at Susie Pearce, who married a floor-walker. Gee! she's a fright, all skin and bone; has four children and does her own work. She'd give anything to be back in the store again. She told me the last time I saw her that she hadn't had a night's decent sleep in five years."

"I'm not going to have any children," said Nellie, separating a guilty hair from its mates and cutting off its end with a resolute snip. There was a hard, unfeminine tone in her voice. "I want to have leisure, so's I can cultivate my mind. I believe I could learn things if I had half a chance. I've got a good memory. I want to go to lectures, and belong to a club, and study French."

"Well," sighed Carrie, "I suppose you can marry almost anybody you want, with your figure and your hair. I wish," and she dropped down from tiptoe with the iron again hot, "that I had your figure; I'd have gone on the stage. It's my collar-bones that hoodoo me. They're like flat-iron handles. You could pick me up by them. If I became a regular jumbo, like that Smith girl in the perfume department, I'd still have collar bones and stringy arms. I'm built that way."

It was Sunday, and the two girls were making a rather more elaborate toilet than usual, consuming the entire morning up to dinner time.

"What's the matter with Harry?" asked Carrie, dusting her face with a powder puff, preparatory to putting on her hat.

"O, he's all right, I guess," answered Nellie, arrayed at last cap-a-pie in the costume in which we first made her acquaintance, and again a statuesque effect in golden brown, even to her veil, which she now stretched down with a comical *moue* of chin and under lip while she tied it behind.

"He asked to call, but of course I couldn't bring him here, and Mrs. Jones is too stingy to let us have the use of a parlor."

"I'm just dying to see him," observed Carrie, stretching her veil loose from her nose with finger and thumb till she got it to the right tension.

There was a stiff wind without, swooping down the dirty streets, peppering the faces and searching the eyes of pedestrians with splinters from bits of wooden walks and fences, with pulverized offal, grains of floating coal, and vicious little pebble-stones. With heads down, the two girls hastened along until they came to a basement under a brick lodging house. A sign hanging in the window bore the legend, "Table board, \$3.50 a week." Going down a short flight of stairs under that leading to the first story, they came into a dark hall. Opening a door, they found themselves in the dining

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room, which was furnished with one long table and three smaller ones, a sideboard, and the necessary complement of chairs.

Nellie and Carrie removed their veils and took their accustomed places at the long table, which, it being Sunday, was covered with a clean cloth, much darned in places and worn thin in others. There was a heavy, thick drinking glass by each plate, and a small, thin napkin, folded into a triangle. In the center was an array of condiments of extraordinary number and variety when one takes into consideration the probable quantity and quality of the things provided to eat them on: a bottle of catsup, whose brilliant and unnatural scarlet hue suggested the forgotten arts of the ancient Tyrian dyers; a blue glass jar of pickles in a holder, on one side of which hung a rusty table fork; and a stained and dirty bottle of imitation Worcestershire, familiarly known as "English" sauce. These larger objects huddled in the center of the board, and were seldom disturbed by the customers of the place; but the inevitable salt and pepper shakers, of pink and blue china, two at each end, were more in demand, and began to jump about like chess pawns as soon as the soup appeared.

Nor should there be forgotten the carafe of cloudy lake water, nor the immemorial basket of musty and



soggy oyster crackers, which latter, to use an expression derived from higher mathematics, was a "constant quantity." Such was Nellie Aikin's boarding house, and it was typical of the feeding places which restore the tired brains and pale blood of a vast host of workers in the stores and factories of our great cities—a haunt of unimaginable economies in the matter of soups and puddings; of stringy meats, of withered vegetables, of canned lobster salads, of factory pies.

Several of the guests had already arrived—a smooth-shaven old gentleman who had an office in the Rookery Building and was currently reported to be interested in mines, a slender, languishing girl connected with a patent medicine concern in the Masonic Temple, and a mysterious blond young man whose business no one ever had been able to find out. He wore very high collars and plastered his hair down in the middle, making two loops of exact size and shape, like a pair of curtains. The old gentleman told the girls they were both looking blooming, and so in fact was Miss Perkins; and the mysterious youth peeped over the top of his Sunday paper to say, "Good morning, ladies." Miss Perkins observed that she thought she smelled celery soup, and that it was a horrid day.

An Irish waitress in white apron and cap came

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to Nellie's shoulder and asked, "Cream of celery? Being resolved in the negative, for Nellie had a theory that soups make the complexion muddy, the girl demanded, "Roast pork and apple sauce, breast of veal with stuffin', chicken dumplin'." Nellie was soon discussing a transparent wing of fowl with scalloped edges, a piece of "white meat" so colorless as to suggest previous toll in the interest of the soup, and a bloodless dumpling with a soft exterior and a bluish impenetrable core. Nellie was hungry and did not speak until the first cravings had been alleviated. Then she whispered in Carrie's ear, "Mrs. Hutchins says he has a fine salary."

## CHAPTER IV

### APRIL HOPES

Harry was walking along Evanston Avenue, toward the north, taking note of various apartment buildings in process of construction, that were advertised for occupancy on May the first. The sun was shining brightly this morning, and Harry had donned his spring overcoat, which he was wearing wide open, and adorned with a *boutonnière* of fragrant violets. There was intoxication in the air which was irresistible—a mingled feeling of relaxation and joy. Harry threw out his chest and drew in long breaths of the balmy air. He had a consciousness of recent escape from prison and of owning the earth. He seemed to take it all into his lungs at each inspiration. A trolley car hummed by, dragging an open trailer. On every side were signs of beginning life anew. Rugs were hanging from windows, and furniture was piled on front stoops. People who were not going to move were cleaning house. Two calciminers, carrying buckets

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and brush, came down the walk, looking at the transoms for a number. A party of urchins was playing peg-top on a side street. The eldest of them was not over ten, but they were swearing like pirates. A robin, sitting upon a fence post, was calling sturdily and confidently, "Hear ye, hear ye, spring has come," like an ancient town crier. Somewhere in the distance a song bird was linking a long, thin chain of silver melody. The "to rent" signs had begun to bloom in the windows of cottages and apartment houses, and men were painting the fronts of little stores. Occasionally an awning had been put up. When Harry passed a large front yard he noticed that green needles were thrusting up through the dead, brown grass of yester-year. Tiny trustful buds were swelling upon the lilac sprigs. A ragged tramp slouched by with a cat-o'-nine-tails for beating carpets. Harry stopped in front of a millinery store, attracted by an array of brightly colored hats. One especially riveted his attention, an imposing structure of black straw, higher on one side than on the other, with rings and rings of gathered chiffon about the under side, a bunch of pink roses under the brim and a larger one atop.

"Isn't that a peacherino?" he soliloquized. "She'd look fine in that!" He walked on, but the

hat dwelt in his mind. He had never noticed the peculiar beauty of women's hats before. "It's an art by itself," he murmured. "If I knew her better, I'd buy it and send it to her. I wonder what they want for such a hat?" He walked back and, entering the store, sheepishly inquired the price, of a pert young Jewess. She informed him that it was twenty-eight dollars, and, when he looked a little blank, took possession of him with great dexterity and showed him a long assortment of cheaper hats, trying them on herself. When he at last succeeded in stammering that he would bring his mother around, the Jewess cried with great animation that she had more suitable articles for older ladies.

Harry at last escaped into the street, feeling somehow that he had "given himself away." When he had recovered his self-possession somewhat, he whistled softly to himself:

"Whew! They come high—but we must have them!"

His tour of inspection ended, Harry lighted a cigar and rode down to the barns on the front platform of the car. There was a certain exhilaration in getting toward the center of the city so swiftly—where she was. He had formulated no definite plan of going to see her yet, but it was a

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pleasure to be traveling in her direction. Seated at last upon the dummy of a North Clark Street cable car, he realized as never before how slowly those lumbering, antiquated bone-shakers went. His landmarks, "Sees's," "Scroggs' Million Dollar Rheumatic Cure," the smell of the tobacco factory, seemed to be whole hours apart. And this feeling of slowness and clumsiness in the method of locomotion was aggravated by the consciousness that he could do nothing to help himself along. Leander, swimming the Hellespont, knew nothing of the impatience of a lover going to his fair one on a North Side cable car. The former could at least expend his exuberant eagerness in the added vigor of his stroke.

But Harry was treated to a diversion. As the car stopped at a crossing, a raw blast came down a side street and the spray of an advancing storm whipped him in the face. Throwing away his cigar, he swung himself along the foot-rest by the stanchions of the dummy, unhooked the chain at the rear, and passed into the closed car. Among the occupants already there were four people, two men and two women, reeking of cigarettes and whisky. The men were youths, mere lads, in fact, well dressed and bearing every evidence of being supplied with more money than was good for them. They were

blear-eyed, with the moist, blubbery lips that follow a night of dissipation. Their collars and cuffs were soiled, and both of them yawned frequently. One was a manly, frank-looking fellow with a strong, good face; and the other a degenerate, with a small chin, bulging forehead, and an air of less resistance to fatigue.

Of the two women, one had a matronly figure, and wore a thick veil. A velvet jacket trimmed with mink, gave her a neat, but not opulent, appearance. The other member of the quartet was a tall young girl who had the wilted look of a rose that has lain in a warm room for several hours after being broken from the stem. There was about her, too, a faint suggestion of "toughness." She dismounted at the next corner, and the degenerate jumped to the street, helped her down, and lifted his hat as she passed him toward the walk. He evidently came of a good family, so far as manners were concerned, and had not yet learned to despise women—as too many youths do in the years before they come to know a good one.

Harry was amused at the "outfit," as he mentally called it. The remaining woman and her escort seemed to be on terms of familiarity without being well acquainted. He laid his hand on her knee in an affectionate manner, and asked her if she be-

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lieved in an anthropomorphic God; whereupon she looked at him blankly and asked.

"What in the world is that? Have you gone crazy?"

And the degenerate yawned and muttered, "Oh, come off, Jim. Cheeze it, can't you?"

"I wonder if they're from The University or the Northwestern?" reflected Harry. "Theological students, probably, out on a lark—regular old-fashioned round-up."

"How slow the car goes," remarked the woman. "I've got to catch a ten o'clock train."

"I'll bet there's a husband waiting for you!" exclaimed her escort; and the trio laughed as at the rarest joke imaginable. They all got off at Ohio Street.

"There's nothing in that sort of thing," mused Harry, passing his hand up and down his forehead where the hair was getting thin. "Takes it out of a man. May do all right for such young chaps as they are, but there's nothing in it for me any more."

Then he felt again the touch of red-gold hair on his cheek with a palpable shiver. He looked at his watch. "Only a quarter past ten—I don't have to show up at the office for an hour yet. God thinks I'm out on the North Side." "God," it may be



necessary to explain, was Mr. Chapin's name for his employer.

"I'll make a brace," he resolved. "I'll stroll up and ask her to go with me to see 'Sag Harbor.' She can't do any more than throw me down."

His resolve once made, he removed his hat and combed back his thinnish black locks with his fingers. Then he carefully set his hat back upon his head, gave the lapels of his spring overcoat a jerk or two, and pulled down his cuffs with the tips of his fingers and the mound of his thumb. Descending at Monroe Street, he walked rapidly toward the Emporium, the great department store where Nellie was working.

## CHAPTER V

### ASSURANCE AT LEAST

He pushed open a storm door, and two or three fat women with bundles in their arms bumped into him. Then a boy in uniform opened another door, and Harry was in the Emporium, a vast caravansary, where anything can be bought from a pin to a home on the instalment plan. He was dazzled for a moment, as the electricity had been turned on in the long rows of big, milk-white globes. He took off his glasses, wiped the rain from them, and looked around. The whole place smelled strongly of the perfumery and fancy soap departments, and, as in all American buildings heated by modern methods, the warmth was oppressive. Harry, from the nature of his own business, was familiar with the fact that the Emporium was a money winner: whose profits were putting up great apartment buildings and storage rooms all over the city; that the principal partner, whose revenue was an incredible number of millions a year, was a comical

old Irish lady who had never yet awakened to a realization of the great possibilities open before the humblest woman when she marries a Jew.

Wherever he looked there was an array of tired girls, each marvelously skilled in some little detail of the business. Standing, or, in rare instances, sitting behind long counters, they appeared to be animated wax figures, cut off at the waist or neck. One near him was tying little bows for women's hair, an industry necessitated by the fad of the moment. Another was selling ribbons, another buttons, another—but a dapper individual stepped up to him and asked in an insinuating manner:

"Anybody waiting on you, sir?"

Harry flushed guiltily and stammered, "I—I want to go to the cloak department."

The man took a few steps forward and pointed with extended arm, saying:

"Take the elevator; get off at the second floor."

Dropping his arm to his body with a slap, he walked away. Harry started briskly in the direction indicated, and came into a huge square well, cut through to the sky-light far above. The numerous floors looked like balconies from where he stood. Great rugs and carpets cascaded over the upper railings. Some were of such size that they dropped the full height of several stories. There

was a continual tapping of pencils upon glass cases, and a sporadic crying of, "Cash! Here cash!" in flat, querulous tones. A big fire-sign advertised a sale of March furniture, and a box-like transparency announced, "The Gordian Knot—a Big Hit!" This last was the popular novel of the moment. Still another article, that seemed from the prominence given it by the firm to be as good a seller as the novel, was a corset with seams running around the body. A bewildering variety of goods was displayed on counters or on racks and frames, and innumerable square banners told of prices by the yard, piece, or dozen. A veritable mob surrounded a circular soda-water counter, sipping froth from glasses, or spearing with tiny spoons at the elusive bits of ice-cream floating within. Literature, Easter symbols, ice-cream soda, corsets, Turkish rugs, soap, buttons, spring underwear, "Cash! Cash! Here cash!"—Harry became bewildered.

"Anybody waiting on you, sir?" asked a dapper individual.

"I'm looking for the elevator, but I seem to be all mixed up." Again the two or three courteous steps, as if the floor-walker were about to guide him personally to the spot, again the automatic right angle of the extended arm. Harry found himself at last in one of the ascending cages, crowded so closely

among women that he was obliged to bend his neck backward in order to get his breath. His body was stuck in among their soft, scented bodies as if sunk in a warm quick-sand. A hard bundle was pressed against his side, and the rough edge of a wide hat sawed his face.

"Second floor!" called the elevator man. "Cloaks, suits, millinery, ladies' and children's underwear, men's and boys' clothing!"

"Ladies' cloaks?" asked Harry.

"Cloaks, suits, millinery," replied the man, with parrot-like insistence.

Harry fought his way out of the feminine quick-sand and paused a moment to smooth down his ruffled feathers. A phonograph somewhere was discoursing a Sousa march in ghostly, metallic tones. In the distance was a banner advertising a spring sale of misses' box reefers. He thought they must be some sort of cloak and stepped briskly down an aisle in that direction. He did not wish to ask for the cloak department again.

"If they knew I didn't want to buy anything, that I had come to jolly one of the girls, they wouldn't stand for it," he mused.

Nellie was nowhere in the vicinity of the box reefers, but away over yonder was another sign calling attention to some extra inducement in con-

nection with ladies' cloaks. With beating heart he went toward it. A small, thin girl, with light hair, frizzed and browned in front from too great devotion to the curling iron, was admiring herself in a full-length mirror. She turned to look at Harry, and he noticed that a cord in her neck stood taut, stretching the skin like the ridge-pole of a tent.

Carrie Vinne stepped languidly toward him with the formula, "Anybody waiting on you?"

"I want to see Miss Aikin," said Harry; "I'm a friend of hers."

A sudden light flooded Carrie's consciousness and illuminated her features.

"I'll tell her!" she cried with animation, skipping away. This was much more interesting than selling goods!

"Nellie," she whispered mysteriously to the model, who was conversing with the "fore-lady" of the millinery department, "Nellie, your friend's come!"

Nellie came majestically across the floor, walking on the balls of her feet. She seemed a queen in a palace to Harry; the great coil of red-gold hair set squarely on top of her head was her crown.

"Why, how do you do, Mr. Chapin," she said sweetly, extending her hand high up.

"Mr. Chapin, this is my friend, Miss Vinne."

"Glad to meet you," chorused Harry and Carrie.

"Have you seen the Hutchinses lately?" asked Nellie. "He's such a nice man."

"He's the best ever," assented Harry. "And so's his wife. I like Mrs. Hutchins even better than I do him."

"Well, that's natural," laughed Carrie, "that your friend, being a gentleman, should like the lady best. Why don't you ask your friend to sit down, Nellie? It's just as cheap as standing."

"No, no, thank you," objected Harry, glancing about nervously to see if anybody had come to be waited on. "I just wanted to see you for a minute. I wanted to ask you if you wouldn't go to the theater with me. They say there's a good bill on at the Grand this week—Bobby Gaylor—he's funnier than a goat. Or maybe you'd rather go see Anna Held. She's all the rage now, or—or—they say—'Sag Harbor' is fine."

"Oh, do go!" cried Carrie. "Gee! I wish somebody'd ask me to go to a theater. They wouldn't have to ask twice!"

Nellie hesitated a moment, looking shrewdly at Harry, out of hazel eyes with a reddish gleam in them. The under lids came up a little till they were nearly covered with the fringe of yellow-brown lashes dropping down from above. Her eyes be-

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came mere slits, and she gave him the furtive glance of the cat that seems half asleep when it is most awake. This man was in earnest, sure. He was fumbling with his hat awkwardly, and there was an expression of intense anxiety on his thin, sallow face.

"Don't refuse," he pleaded, changing from one foot to the other. "We shall—I shall, at least, pass such an enjoyable evening."

"Couldn't we go somewhere else?" asked Nellie. "I don't care for Bobby Gaylor or Anna Held."

"Anywhere you like!" cried Harry eagerly.

Nellie thought a moment. Her mind reverted to "Quo Vadis" and "Cyrano," but neither was playing in town at that time.

"Couldn't we go to Powers' to see 'The Ambassador?'" she asked. "I want to see something instructive, something improving to my mind."

"Oh, certainly, of course," assented Harry, who would have been just as enthusiastic had she mentioned spiritual instead of mental culture as the main object of the theater. "One must always improve their mind whenever they get a chance. Shall we make it to-morrow evening, at seven-thirty? I'll call for you."

"With pleasure. I suppose the invitation includes Miss Vinne?"





Couldn't we go to see  
"The Ambassador?"



Harry's face fell. "Oh, certainly," he stammered, "that goes without saying. Didn't I mention Miss Vinne?"

"Miss Aikin, Miss Aikin," called a saleswoman. "Will you step this way just a moment?"

With an "Excuse me, please," Nellie was gone. A moment later Harry saw her attired in a silver-colored, brocaded opera cloak, trimmed with chiffon and chinchilla. It had wide flowing sleeves, and the fur collar turned up on each side of her face brought its silver gray into contrast with the gold of her hair. At the end of a short beat she turned with all the majesty of a queen and swept a little way in the direction of Harry and Carrie.

"See that old frump in the chair?" whispered the latter. "She's got a figure like a sack of potatoes. She imagines the coat would look on her like it does on Nellie."

"So it would—nit!" laughed Harry. "But isn't this a kind of a pea-and-shell game? Anything would look well on Miss Aikin."

"Guess you think so," said the girl shyly. "Look here, you don't have to take me along to-morrow night. Nellie is so . . ."

But Chapin had quite warmed to the frizzled little woman who was looking up into his face.

"You come right along," he said, "I really want you to. I'm a smooth party, you see. I have to be solid with you; you're Miss Aikin's chum!"

"Oh, that's it, eh? Well, I'll say a good word for you." Harry cast one more glance at the stately figure in the opera cloak, and bidding Carrie, "good by till to-morrow night," he went away.

"Anna Held!" he muttered with indignation. "Anna Held is a cow compared with her. Isn't in her class at all."

"Daown, going daown?"

As he stepped into the elevator, the phonograph called after him in the nasal drawl of a well-known actor of rustic roles: "The feller that gits onter the floor fust shall kiss the purtiest girl in the room—ah, ha! ha! ha! ha!" And followed by that spectral laughter, he left the place, moistening his dry lips with his tongue, and wondering how he should be able to wait till to-morrow night.

## CHAPTER VI

### A MATCHMAKING

The theater party was a success all around. Harry enjoyed it because it gave him several hours in the society of the girl with the red-gold hair, and Nellie because she found "The Ambassador" a high-toned performance that seemed a thing really worth talking about. As for little Carrie Vinne, though she would have preferred Anna Held, she was recompensed by the fact that the costumes worn by the "Ambassador" people were "perfectly lovely."

But one has little chance to make love at a theater party of three, after all. True, Harry invited the girls down to Rector's after the show, but not even there did he find the least opportunity even to cast a sentimental glance in the direction of the fair one. The place was crowded, and the blaze of vulgarly redundant electric lights reflected in a wilderness of mirrors gave glaring publicity to every detail of the meal. So Harry did some deep thinking, with all that astuteness of per-

ception and facility of resource common to madmen and lovers—and lie upon an excellent expedient. He went to his friend Crissey and asked for an invitation to dinner for himself and Miss Aikin. Crissey did not fail him; and Miss Aikin gladly accepted a written invitation to accompany Mr. Chapin to the Crisseys' on Sunday for the noon-day meal. This was the sort of thing that she had dreamed of.

Harry called for Nellie at eleven o'clock, and she was ready to come down as soon as he rang. In fact, she had been ready for some time, as she did not know what could be done with him should it be necessary to invite him in. The lodging house had no public reception room. The weather had relapsed, and there was a blizzard on. Harry turned up the collar of his coat as he stood on the icy steps, mentally commenting that "these raglan coats may be swell, but they're not warm."

"Is Miss Aikin in?" he asked, as a nondescript girl, neither lady nor servant, virtuous nor disreputable, the landlady's daughter, in fact, opened the door.

"Is that you, Mr. Chapin?" called a voice from the upper landing that sent a thrill of warmth through Harry's veins. "I'm coming right down." In another moment she was standing on the threshold,

so radiant an apparition, her admirer felt, to merge from so cheerless a hall with its acrid smell. She wore a neat cloth coat and the brown hat, and she had about her neck a collar of brown marten fur.

"Isn't it a perfectly abominable day?" she exclaimed, putting her muff up to her throat, as the wind threw a handful of snow at her face.

"You'll both get snowed under," cried the landlady's daughter, closing the door.

"Kind of a con game on the part of the weather man," assented Harry. "But I like it—it stirs up a man's blood and relieves the monotony. Look out, or you'll slip on the steps," and he solicitously took her by the arm. He could not help noticing through all her clothing that it was round and firm, and the discovery, or confirmation, rather, made him feel cool about the roots of his hair.

"Crissey lives out on Third St. Boulevard, on the West Side," explained Harry. "We'll take a street transfer on Clark, and then again on North Avenue." Opening his umbrella, he held her close to him, and so they pushed their way against the wind, laughing and chatting merrily.

"It's going out like a lion," observed Nellie, catching her breath. Horizontal lines of snow were flying by. Big, soft flakes adhered to their cloth-

ing, beautiful single crystals, or fluffy clusters like bits of cotton. When the fickle wind died for a moment the air was thick with innumerable white lances plunging downward at an oblique angle, while here and there beavies of lighter flakes swirled upward, as if rebounding from the earth. The trees, on the side facing the wind, had white lines along the center of their trunks and greater limbs, with the dark brown of the bark showing on either side. A yard filled with lilac bushes resembled a bit of fairy land. The shrubs, on which the bursting buds had been visible only a few days before, were now all in white, as though they had suddenly burst into a profusion of bloom.

"See there!" cried Harry, enthusiastically, "doesn't that remind you of those little kaleidoscopes you used to look into when you were a child? Sort of ghostly and unreal?"

"It's more like the trees and things we used to make in a fruit jar," replied Nellie. "There were wire skeletons inside, and we put alum in, and it settled on the wire and made white men and trees and—and—things."

The air and sky were milk-white. The tops of the houses and of the street cars were sugar-coated with snow, and the telegraph wires were long ropes of frayed cotton. They scrambled on to the tail



of a north-bound trolley, and Nellie unfastened the collaret from her neck to shake the snow from it. Harry gave her coat one or two passes with his handkerchief as she stepped into the car.

"If it melts on, you'll take cold," he explained when she did not wait for the attention.

The Crisseys lived in a frame house, with a pointed tower at one corner somewhat resembling a steeple. There were two uprights, both facing the street, and standing side by side; one was lower than the other and farther back, giving the architectural effect of a mother house with its young. The maid came to the door, followed closely by Crissey, who would have opened it himself had not his wife despatched Lena with much haste and trepidation. Crissey had been so busy of late years that he did not know that Americans no longer open their own doors to admit guests.

"Come in," he cried heartily, "and shake yourselves off. How do you do, Miss Aikin? Let me help you with your cloak."

"Isn't this a corker?" exclaimed Harry, referring to the weather. They stepped into a reception room where a pleasant grate fire was burning. Through one door they looked into a parlor, where the most conspicuous objects were a piano and an oil painting of Mrs. Crissey's father, whose round, toothless

mouth was so tightly closed that wrinkles ran out in all directions like spokes of a wheel. Another door opened into Crissey's study, where could be seen an easy chair, upholstered in leather, shelves filled with rows of books, and a table on which stood a drop-light with a green shade.

Mrs. Crissey came in, a two-year-old girl hiding in a fold of her dress. The little one hid behind her mother's leg as though it were a post, and peeped around it at the guests, a fleeting apparition of tousled white hair, fat cheeks wearing a splash of raspberry jam, and monstrous blue eyes. Another girl of four, in a blue and white pinafore, with pink ribbons tied in her hair, stood in the hall door holding a doll by the leg; and in the deeper vista was a boy of nine, with his arms held stiffly at his sides, and a nervous look on his face as though he were trying to remember previous instructions about conduct.

"How do you do, Mr. Chapin?" said Mrs. Crissey, holding out her right hand, while she pulled the fallen little one to its legs with her left.

"Dorothy, this is Miss Aikin," said Mr. Crissey, and the two women shook hands.

"Disagreeable weather, isn't it," remarked Nellie, taking a proffered seat.

"Too horrid for anything."

Mrs. Crissey dragged the little Dorothy from the fold of her dress and set the child on her knee.

"Ah there!" cried Harry, "ah there! Look out! Don't you make goo-goo eyes at me." Going up to the little one, he pinched her gently with each word, talking baby talk, "I'll tell your—mama—on—you —, and she won't stand for it, not a minute."

The baby bubbled over with laughter, and Harry tossed her in the air, crying, "Oop-te-day."

"Isn't it remarkable," said Mrs. Crissey, "the way Dorothy takes to Mr. Chapin? I assure you," turning to Harry, "you're the only person outside of the family she isn't afraid of."

"Oh, she's onto her job all right, Dorothy is," laughed Harry. "She's got good judgment—ahem. No, the fact of the matter is, Mrs. Crissey, that children are like dogs: they know by instinct when people really like 'em. Hello, there's the other one. Come here, Molly."

"I ain't Molly."

"Yes you are, Molly Jane Jones."

"No I ain't. I'm Agnes Matilder Cwissey, an' I live at ninety-four Humboldt Boulevard."

"All right. Well, come here, Agnes Matilder, and let me see your doll."

The child advanced without hesitation and extended the doll, head down.

"She's lost she's eyes," she explained. "I poked 'em wiz a pencil, and they comed right out. They're in there." She shook the doll, and the loose eyes rattled inside the head.

"I'll tell you what I'll do," said Harry. "You put her in my overcoat pocket out there in the hall, and I'll take her to the doll-hospital and get her eyes fixed."

Agnes looked inquiringly at her mother, who said:

"You'd better do as Mr. Chapin says, Aggie dear, and he'll bring Lucinda back with her eyes as good as ever."

"Surely pop?"

"Surely pop," said Harry.

"He'll take her to the housepittal?"

Assured on this point, and also that he would bring her back, the child went out into the hall and stuffed Lucinda into Chapin's overcoat pocket.

"Where's Jim?" asked Harry.

"James dear!" called the mother, and the boy advanced into the room; walking straight up to Nellie, he stood very close to her, stiff as a totem pole, looking over her head with unseeing eyes.

"This is my son, Mr. James Crissey," said Crissey whimsically, and Jim extended his arm automatically, allowing his hand to hang limp at the wrist.

Nellie shook the hand, and Jim said in a sepulchral tone, "I'm glad to meet you," after which he turned about until he was exactly facing Harry, for whom he made a bee line. Arrived, he again extended the limp hand. Harry seized it and gave it a sudden jerk, nearly throwing Jim off his feet.

"Hello, John L.," he said. Then he whispered something in Jim's ear:

"How did you come off with that boy that was going to lick you?"

"Say!" blurted out Jim in a perfectly natural voice, "ye ought to've seen me soak 'um!"

"Now, Mr. Chapin," cried Mrs. Crissey, "I believe you are responsible for a good deal of Jim's badness. He's getting to be a terrible fighter. I've had to threaten to whip him if he fights any more. He gets his clothes torn and his nose all bloody. He came in one day last week a perfect sight."

"How's this, John L.?" laughed Harry; "this don't seem to be one-sided after all. The other fellow's right there while you are slugging him, and then mother gives you a whipping when you come home."

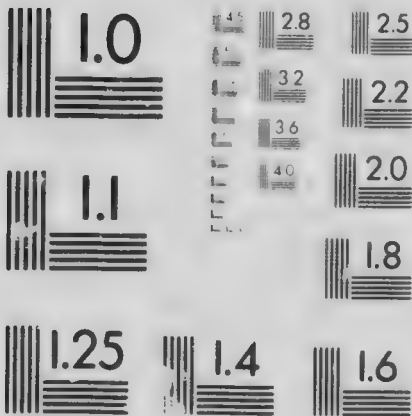
"Huh," said Jim, sullenly; "I take ma's lickin' out'n the other feller, too."

Crissey laughed heartily. "There, there, Dorothy, don't mind," he said. "Jim takes after me."



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I was a fighter, too, when I was a boy—am yet, for that matter. Jim'll come out all right, you see if he doesn't. Do you know, Miss Aikin, that the boy has quite a fine idea of justice, and that he never picks a quarrel or imposes on lads smaller than himself?"

"How very interesting!" exclaimed Nellie.

"Excuse me, please," said Mrs. Crissey, "while I go and see what has become of our dinner. I warrant you are all starved half to death."

"Here, John L., let me feel your muscle," whispered Harry.

A moment later Lena appeared in the door of the reception room, announcing dinner; and Agnes Matilda wandered in with her hands clasped behind her back and her little face in the air, chanting in a high, humdrum voice, "Dinner's weady, dinner's weady, dinner's weady—" a song which continued even after she had been placed in her high chair, and which only ceased after stern sotto-voce threats of ignominious removal to the kitchen. Mrs. Crissey took her place at one end of the table, flanked on her left by a row of childish faces—the baby next her, then Agnes Matilda, then the pugnacious Jim. Harry and Nellie sat at her right, and Crissey took his accustomed place at the foot.

Mrs. Crissey was a sweet little woman, with



traces of care on her still youthful face, and hands that showed evident signs of work. Her complexion was still good, but the red in her cheeks had dwindled to the smallest, palest patches; and there were lines of care about her eyes and mouth—lines, however, that did not detract from the sweetness of her expression, for they were evidently traced by the finger of love and eager sacrifice. There was a tiny blotch of white hair over her forehead that lay among the soft brown of her still abundant locks as a patch of snow upon the ground in early autumn. Yet who shall say that Dorothy Crissey was in the autumn of her days albeit her position as mother of a sufficiently large family gave her a matronly air? She was in reality in her thirtieth year. Her eyes were gray, and a trifle too close together for beauty. They were serious eyes, soft and tender; and she had a way of holding her chin a trifle down and looking up at you when she talked. Her eyebrows were straight and delicately penciled, save for a cunning little wave in the one on the left. She wore her hair parted plainly in the middle and drawn back over the tips of her ears, ears which were, perhaps, a little too large. At least, a spiteful schoolmate had told her so in early girlhood and had caused her to tuck the tops of them for a life-time beneath her hair. Her

nose was small, and her upper lip at the center of the bow a trifle prominent; yet her mouth was her sweetest feature. It will be seen that there was nothing Grecian about this little woman, whose virtues and charm were all of the domestic—the American domestic—order. The one thing about her that was most unmistakable and redolent was femininity; and yet her face was rounded out by a good strong chin that spoke of individual will and the power to do and to suffer. She was dressed in a dark blue serge with white collar and cuffs.

The dinner proceeded without much talk. There was oyster soup, a good honest roast of beef, a salad, and a brick of ice-cream, brought in from the drug store on the corner. Mrs. Crissey was busy much of the time feeding the two babies. Once she asked Nellie if she did not think Gurler's milk a blessing, and Nellie confessed that she did not know what it was, whereupon the mother declared that she could not live without it. Nellie was in a somewhat embarrassing position and could not think of anything to say. She repeated one or two of John Oliver Hobbes' aphorisms from "The Ambassador" rather inconsequentially; and Harry, who did not remember having heard them before, was confirmed in his admiration for her intellect. She was in deep water when Mrs. Crissey talked

to her about the children, and as for talking to them, it would have been easier for her to converse with Professor Garner's monkeys. Harry had now become a great wit in the eyes of the little folk, and they laughed outrageously whenever he opened his mouth. Once Agnes Matilda, with her mouth full of mashed potato, gave sudden vent to a flood of volubility.

"Sometimes the silderns comes over to play with me, Bessie and Dell Lau—teryung—and we play, 'London Bwidge is falling down, falling down, falling down; London Bwidge is falling down, falling down; London Bwidge is—' "

"Aggie, in heaven's name!" cried Mr. Crissey. "Dorothy, can't you stop that child? If she gets started on that once, she may keep it up all day."

"Agnes!" commanded the mother, leaning over and shaking the child, who had kept right on, "if you don't stop that, you can't have any ice-cream."

"My pair lady!" concluded Agnes. "I'll be good, mama, oh, I'll be good, mama."

Harry laughed immoderately, and Nellie murmured, "Children are so interesting!"

"What's this?" asked Crissey, as Lena brought on something in small dishes. "Oranges?"

"Taste it, and see how you like it," replied his wife. "It's orange salad. I got the recipe out of

this morning's paper. How do you like it, Miss Aikin?"

It was one of those abominable dishes which we Americans perpetrate under the absurd name of salad—in the present instance, sliced oranges, lettuce, peanuts and garlic, with olive oil.

"It is delicious," replied Nellie, tasting it judicially, though she ate none of it.

"As for me," commented Crissey, "I prefer my lettuce in a Christian manner, with vinegar and sugar."

Jim and Harry were the only ones at the table who actually ate their portions; Harry out of good nature, and Jim by strength of a boy's indiscriminating appetite.

Little Dorothy and Agnes set up such a fearful howling for more ice-cream that Mrs. Crissey was obliged to leave the table early. Dorothy Second went to sleep straightway, and Agnes was induced to stay a little while in the kitchen with Lena.

Mrs. Crissey talked to Nellie while the men smoked in Crissey's study.

"Have you read 'The Gordian Knot?'" asked Nellie, referring to the novel advertised on the department store transparency. Mrs. Crissey had not even

heard of it, and Nellie declared that it was almost impossible to keep up with all the latest successes.

"I am now reading Tolstoi's 'Resurrection,'" she added. "Don't you think it is perfectly grand?"

Mrs. Crissey had not read "The Resurrection."

"I don't get much time for reading," she explained. "I am busy with the children from the time Aggie and Dorothy wake up in the morning until bed-time. First, the little ones have to be dressed and given their breakfasts, then I have to get them ready for school and take Aggie to the kindergarten; then I have to superintend the getting of lunch and dinner, and, between times, there is mending and a hundred little things to be 'tended to!"

"I shouldn't think you'd get much time to cultivate your mind," said Nellie, sympathetically.

"I don't," laughed Mrs. Crissey, merrily, as though it were the best joke in the world. "Edward does enough of that for both of us. My husband is a great student," she continued, with a note of pride in her voice. "He sits up and pores over his musty old law books or writes till all hours of the night. My husband laughs at my books—what few I have," and she took a volume from the center-table. "I bought this because every-

body is talking about it, but I can't get interested in it to save my life. It's a dollar and a half book, and I got it for ninety-seven cents."

Nellie strolled about the room and picked up the half dozen volumes that she found lying about, and glanced at their titles. Besides the "ninety-seven cent one," there was "David Harum," Riley's "Home Folks," a "Life of Dwight L. Moody," the inevitable "Lucile," and a center-table edition of Longfellow.

"I can't understand what people are making such a fuss over that 'David Harum' for," remarked Mrs. Crissey, following Nellie about. "Just an ignorant old Yankee horse trader. Now, here's a book that I did like. Dorothy rolled down the basement steps while I was reading it, and Agnes nearly fell out the front window. I don't know what would become of the children if I should get hold of another such book," and she laughed again. "You have to keep your eyes on the little dears every moment, or something is sure to happen to them; and when they are the quietest they are either in the greatest danger or the most mischief. This is the sweetest story," extending a book to Nellie. "It's all about a princess who married a king, but remained true all the same to a young knight, and became his wife in the end. I like to read about princesses, don't you? Especially when the book

makes you feel that they're just the same as other women, after all."

"It must be a great privilege to live with such a brainy, brilliant man as your husband," remarked Nellie.

"Oh, Edward is the best man in the world," replied the wife, eagerly and warmly, giving Nellie a grateful look from her serious gray eyes. "He's as good and noble as he is talented, but I don't get a chance to see much of him these days. When he isn't busy with politics or a case at court, he is working on a horrid book that he is writing—something on contracts, or corporations, or something of that sort. I couldn't understand it if he were to explain it to me. It is all I can do to keep the children quiet when he is writing. He tells me if I succeed in doing that I shall have done as much toward the book as he has, and that he will be quite willing to dedicate it to me." And she laughed again. Mrs. Crissey's laugh, by the way, was the most cheerful and infectious sound in the world, and Nellie joined in this time, despite the fact that she felt the joke was at her hostess's expense.

When, later, Crissey invited Nellie into his sanctum sanctorum to look at his books, she felt a definite sense of pity for the handsome, white-

haired, young-looking man, so brilliant, so studious, who was tied up to so stupid a wife and a family of squalling children. Harry had gone to show Jim how to set a basket rat-trap in the basement, and Dorothy had waked up, crying, "Mama," with the full force of an admirable pair of lungs.

"I regard this as a great privilege," said Nellie, with her explosive little laugh. "May I sit here in the author's chair? Perhaps some great thoughts will come into my head."

Mr. Crissey's library was characteristic. Besides the books that he was collecting with reference to his work on "The Law of Corporations," there were standard authors in sets—Shakespeare, of course, Gibbon, Macaulay, Hume, Scott, Thackeray, Dickens, Locke, Milton, and some of the old dramatists; translations of the principal classics, as well as of some of the foreign masters of contemporary thought—Tolstoi, Zola, Maeterlinck, and a few of the sweeter poets, such as Keats, Wordsworth and Shelley. On his table lay one or two recent novels of deeper purpose, "The Resurrection," by Tolstoi, and "Labor," by Zola.

"Oh, are you reading 'The Resurrection,' Mr. Crissey?" cried Nellie. "Everybody is reading that book now, and everybody is talking about it. Didn't you find it perfectly grand?"



Crissey picked the volume up and held it at some little distance from his face, looking at it while he expressed his opinion.

"It is certainly a powerful work," he said oracularly, "but that is no reason for its popularity. Though it was written for men and intended as a sermon, it is read principally by women; and women, I fancy"—here he laughed, "who have some grudge against the sterner sex—either unwilling old maids or embittered advocates of equal rights, hangers-on of Adamless clubs—all that nondescript mob of amphibious creatures, the sort who wear tight skirts and derby hats, you know."

"Why, Mr. Crissey! And why do such people read 'The Resurrection'?"

"Well, perhaps I am putting it a little too strong, but I have no use for an unwomanly woman. Why you see, in this novel of Tolstoi's, the reckless young man is made to feel the enormity of his offense toward one of the weaker sex, and his conscience compels him to attempt some restitution. Now, I have a theory that the more a woman apes masculinity the greater is her secret yearning for the weaknesses and graces of her real sex. Such a woman feels a sort of sympathy with a victim of the Tolstoi type, because she realizes that she herself is a victim of man's weakness. In the right sort of

a civilization—a civilization where men were really men, women would not be driven to the necessity of being masculine. It's a sort of general protest against man's inhumanity to woman, you see."

"How beautifully you do explain it!" gushed Nellie. "What a great gift it is to be so eloquent!"

Crissey laid the book down gently, and a scarcely perceptible expression of weariness came over his face.

"Great indeed," he laughed; "but here come the folks."

Harry found an opportunity to speak to Crissey alone before leaving the house.

"Isn't she a peach, old man?" he said, chuckling hysterically. "Isn't she a regular queen, eh? And brains! God didn't forget anything when he was making her. He put it all in; he didn't leave out a thing. How do you think I stand? Now, just from your own observation, you know, do you think I'm playing my hand all right?"

There is but one thing to do when a friend has fixed his heart upon a member of the opposite sex, if you wish to remain in his good graces, and Crissey did that thing.

"I think you hold four aces, old man," he said kindly.

Harry seized his hand and shook it nervously.

"Honest?" he said. "You're not stringing me just because you're a friend of mine?"

"No; I really think you're solid there." Harry gave the hand another spasmodic shake.

Mr. and Mrs. Crissey came to the door to bid their friends good by. The gentle hostess held Dorothy in her arms, and her husband towered beside her. Aggie dashed suddenly out on the porch, and, pulling open Harry's pocket, peeped within to see if Lucinda was still there.

The sun was shining with dazzling brilliancy on the snowy world, though it was late in the afternoon, as Harry and Nellie walked briskly down the boulevard in the direction of their car. The English sparrows were burrowing in the fluffy snow, shaking it from their wings with all the seeming enjoyment of mischievous children.

"What an interesting man Mr. Crissey is!" remarked Nellie. "And so much more intelligent than his wife!"

During the long street-car journey, she asked Harry if he had read Tolstoi's "Resurrection," and he was obliged to confess, somewhat shamefacedly, that he had not.

"The book was really intended by the author as a sermon," explained Nellie, "a sermon to men, but the people who are really reading it are the women:

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women's rights, club women, and so on. There is a young man in it who is made to feel sorry for the wrong which he had done to a young woman, and he tries to make restitution. All women feel sympathy for each other, no matter how much they may ape masculine manners. Man's inhumanity to woman is a bond of sympathy between them."

"I must try to read up more," said Harry, humbly; "I must get you to make me out a list of books."

"I'm not in that woman's class at all," he mused, as he strolled down town from the Erie Street lodging house. "I'll have to bone up—but even if I were to swallow a whole library, I wouldn't have her brains. What a witty way she has of saying things! Let me see, what was that? Oh, yes; 'man's humanity to woman is the bond of sympathy.' That's good enough to put in the paper."

And so he walked aimlessly along, dreaming of the girl with the red-gold hair, nor did he awake from his reverie until reminded by his stomach that a man must eat, even though he be in love. He looked about him; the pall of evening was settling over the grim city, and the electric signs had begun to wink changing colors.

## CHAPTER VII

### THE DIE IS CAST

After Nellie had once made up her mind that Harry "meant business," as Carrie Vinne expressed it, it did not take her long to decide in his favor. Thirty dollars a week, earned by another, with no necessity for trying on beautiful cloaks all day that other women might wear them, seemed to her a decided improvement upon her present condition. It was not queenly, but it was a definite opportunity to become a respectable married woman, to keep a "girl," to belong to a church and club, to cultivate her mind. As she explained this to Carrie, one night as they were preparing for bed, she brought her eyes together until the hazel pupils with the reddish gleam in them peeped through mere slits, and the long curling lashes, yellow-brown in color, swept downward toward her cheek.

"Yes, 'n' Harry's all right, too," said Carrie, who, despite her collar-bones that resembled flat-irons, had a catholic friendliness for the other sex. "When

he gets on that raglan coat of his and a silk hat, he's a regular dude. Gee, didn't he look swell the other night when he took us to the theater? And he's good-hearted, too, Harry is. If he likes any one, nothing's too good for 'em."

"He's not intellectual," replied Nellie, in the tone of one making an inventory, "but you can't expect too much, I suppose."

Harry proposed one Sunday night in May, in Lincoln Park. It had been one of those warm days which occur in this inconsequential climate before the spring is fairly launched. Nellie went with him for a walk. He remembered it afterward as the happiest, most delirious day of his life. A heavy fog had fallen during the forenoon, and the eager boy had gone forth early to study the face of the weather, fearful lest rain should spoil his pleasure. He had noticed that the buds were swelling on the trees, and that the moisture, trickling down a million branches and twigs, was dropping like tears from the tiny extremities. Several times, as he heard splashes on the paved walk and saw the drops spread out in irregular stains, he had looked up at the sky with startled eagerness to make sure that it was not indeed raining. A fog horn, somewhere out in the Lake, moored at times, like a cow whose calf has been taken from her. At noon the

sun was shining brightly, and by three o'clock many of the buds had actually opened their fairy fists and were spreading their delicate palms in benediction above a resurgent world. Harry fancied that he could actually see the buds open, and his heart felt as though it were opening with them.

"If she gives me the least encouragement, I'll speak," he muttered, clenching his fist in determination, not surmising that the lady had resolved to seize this occasion to make him declare his love by one or another of those wiles which are known to the most timid of the finer sex.

They passed the late afternoon strolling about the park, looking at the animals, the flowers in the green-house, and the beds of crocuses and other flowers which seem to spring up on lawns and under front windows, beneath the very heels of winter. They took a ride in a pony carriage, not returning the little animals until the electric lights began to gleam among the trees.

Nellie demurely assented to all of Harry's devices to prolong the outing, nor did she demur when he conducted her to a seat in a retired nook.

"Are you chilly?" he asked her frequently. "I should never forgive myself if I let you catch cold." And Nellie replied:

"No: not at all. It's just like summer, isn't it?"

"Oh, we'll have snow yet," repeated Harry every time, studying desperately for some way to lead up to the momentous question in a natural and skilful manner. But the more he studied, the more muddled he became, and the farther away from the point he seemed to get. Suppose after all this stately and beautiful creature, who must have been sought after by many men of greater consequence than he, were going out with him simply because she regarded him as a safe though agreeable person? Pshaw! it was impossible that she could love him. If he asked her, and she refused, as she was almost sure to do, then what would become of his beautiful dream that had grown so necessary to his life?

"What makes you tremble so?" asked Nellie. "Are you cold? I am not. See how warm my hand is."

He held the warm, strong, soft hand in his and leaned toward her in the wan light. His face looked thin and drawn.

"Nellie," he murmured hoarsely.

"Yes," she whispered.

"I—I—are you sure you are not getting cold?"

She could scarcely repress an exclamation of disgust. "How can I ever live with such a fool?" she thought.



After a few moments, she began to fumble with the knot of her veil behind her head.

"Please untie it for me," she requested. As Harry was working at the knot, the red-gold hair tickled him on the cheek. He lost his head, and in a reckless swoon of passion put his arm about her neck.

"I love you, I love you," he sobbed. "Will you marry me, Nellie? Will you be my wife?"

Nellie suffered him to kiss her and to hold her tight, with his hot face pressed to hers. Then she sat up straight, and arranged her hat and her disordered locks.

"There's some one coming," she whispered.

## CHAPTER VIII

### THE LAND OF DESIRE

The first Sunday in June, Harry and Nellie went over to St. Joe to get married. They were accompanied by Miss Vinne. A little before nine the bridal party walked through the large, shed-like building where the tickets are bought, and across the bridge to the lower deck of the steamer which was to sail with them to the Islands of the Blest.

Oh, Bridal Boat, what burdens of hopes and fears do you bear away every Sunday morning during all the long summer! Beyond that dim, misty veil yonder where the blue sky seems to melt into the blue lake and become one with it, who knows what new life, what destinies await? As the lovers come over two by two, their hearts are thrilled with the old primeval joy, with all the romance and yearning of the twilight ages. They feel the same delirium that Sappho and Phaon felt, Pyramus and Thisbe, Leander and Hero, Paris and Helen, Abelard and Heloise. Their names may be Polish,

Swedish or German, as they appear in the newspaper lists next morning, and they may be going to settle down in little wooden cottages or in stove-heated flats; but, oh! they love, and they are steaming away to the land of Heart's Desire. A sailing ship should carry them off over purple waters by the light of the silver moon, to the sweet strumming of ancient harps and the voice of distant singing. Instead, they go on a lake steamer, down a dirty river, while boys cry the Sunday papers, and a negro orchestra plays rag-time—but oh! they love, and not all the horrors of modern civilization can take the romance out of young love. God bless them all, and make them happy; and, if an awakening must come in some instances, may it be put off as long as possible! May those who are fools stay in their paradise for many years; for what paradise is better than a fool's while it lasts?

It would not have been difficult for the most inexperienced eye to pick out Harry and Nellie as a bridal couple, despite the air of bravado and unconcern which they assumed. In any case, the self-conscious manner of Miss Vinne, whose romantic soul made her almost imagine that she was going to her own wedding, would have betrayed them. Nellie looked ravishingly sweet, attired in a dark blue foulard silk and a blue straw hat

trimmed with corn flowers and taffeta ribbon. Her gown, to be sure, had been a "leader" at Handel's for the past two weeks, and one could have seen half a hundred like it any Sunday morning on taking a walk.

Nellie never did any sewing. She had never learned, and besides, she had not the time. She accepted philosophically the fact that all her garments were sewed together with a chain stitch and were likely to give way somewhere at any moment. But they generally looked jaunty while they lasted, and this particular gown was no exception to the rule.

Harry was attired in a gray spring suit and straw hat and carried a light overcoat on his arm. Though unutterably tempted to help Nellie up the bridge and the stairs to the upper deck, he walked boorishly on ahead, according to directions, while his sweetheart followed as best she could with Carrie.

To Harry and Miss Vinne, it must be explained, was due the ideal plan of going to St. Joe for the ceremony. Harry had no relative at all at whose house he could have been married, and Nellie's only living kin of any nearness was her father, who lived in the little village from whence she came. For reasons of her own, she kept him in

the background. She had contented herself with writing to him concerning the coming change in her life; and Harry had received a queer, fanatical letter, asking him if he believed in baptism by immersion, and advising him not to play cards, even with his wife.

"Some men think they can play just a little whist in their own house," it said, "and that nobody will see them. But God sees them, and they become common, ordinary card-players." A large part of the letter was devoted to a rambling discourse on the subject of matrimony in general, which the writer seemed to regard as a permissible but not advisable step, clinching his argument with Christ's statement that in Heaven they neither marry nor are given in marriage, and with St. Paul's to the effect that "it is better to marry than to burn." Harry was too happy to think much of the letter, and he dismissed it with the reflection, "he must be a queer old guy; it's a good thing he don't live in this town."

They took seats on the upper deck and amused themselves in attempting to pick out the bridal couples, only those who came aboard with children escaping suspicion. They were in a narrow canal lined with huge red warehouses, labeled with great signs. A bridge, crowded with people, swung par-

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allel with the current, and looked as though a portion of the highway had been blown about and suspended in mid-air.

Pedestrians, bicyclists and carriages rapidly collected on both sides of the river, all intensely interested in the marriage boat. A privileged boy dashed through the ticket office and shouted from the walk below:

"Get your morning papers, and your chewing gum!"

Two wits leaned from the prow of a ship anchored a few yards above and engaged in a contest of facetiousness.

"I'll leave my happy home for you-oo-oo!" sang one.

"Cheer up; the worst is yet to come!" bawled the other.

"Take my address; divorces on the instalment plan," responded the first, throwing what appeared to be a pack of business cards into the air.

Every sally provoked a burst of derisive groans or shrieks of laughter from the bridal steamer. Harry and Carrie were highly amused, but Nellie murmured: "How vulgar! Will we never start?"

At last they were off, headed for the Lake, winding along the dirty, useful, busy river. The long walls of red buildings slid by them, tall brown elevators,

whole cities of freight cars in parallel lines, huge piles of coal. Every moment an impudent, lawless little tug darted by in asthmatic haste, coughing out clouds of black smoke. They entered the mouth of the river, where were a few trim yachts lying within the breakwater. Harry felt that they were now really embarking upon their new life, and he pressed Nellie's hand furtively. Soon they were looking back on a line of square, dark buildings, which they were rapidly leaving. Those which faced the Lake front seemed to emerge from a vast pall of rolling, tumbling smoke, frowning there grim and forbidding—against the battlements and outer walls of some plutonian capital. For some time they sat silent, engrossed in the novelty of the situation, basking in the beauty of the Lake and the clear sunshine.

"I don't feel as if I ever was going back to Chicago again," exclaimed Carrie at last. "Who would think that you could get out of it and away from it in half an hour?"

"You must get married, Carrie," cried Harry, "and then it won't make any difference where you live. Any old place will be all right so long as it's home."

"That's just it," replied the girl. "You two are going back to your cosy little flat, and I will show

up to-morrow in the store; and then all this will be a dream."

"Come around to our house, and Nellie and I will cheer you up any time you're blue. Won't we, Nellie?"

"Carrie knows she will always be welcome at my home," replied Nellie.

"I guess you'll think three's a crowd and two's company, for a while."

"No such thing," replied Nellie severely. "How vulgar that would be! Dear me, Carrie, you're quite incorrigible"—and she laughed in her nervous, explosive way, a habit that was more a manner of talking than a laugh. They were sitting on the shady side of the boat, back in a sort of corner between the rail and the outside wall of the main parlors. There was a dense throng and a universal fluttering of white newspapers. Every moment a man appeared holding camp stools and looking for places. Then the people already seated would instinctively lean toward open spaces in their line of formation, or throw out proprietary legs. Mothers passed through the crowd, sturdy, self-reliant women, dragging their offspring. Young girls in groups of three and four wound their way in and out in long strings, their hands clasped and their arms outstretched.



The boat had no sooner passed the crib than lunch baskets were opened; and popcorn balls, boxes of cracker-jack, slices of bread and butter, apples, bananas, began to appear in the hands of children, and to be scattered about the deck.

"Get onto his job-lots," whispered Carrie, nudging Harry's elbow. "Gee, ain't he got it bad? St! st! Nell; look at that couple just over Harry's left shoulder."

An elderly man, dressed in youthful style, was trying to scratch a spot from his fair partner's shirt waist with a long, transparent finger nail. Desisting from this occupation as soon as he perceived that the spot was indelible, he pulled, not hard enough to hurt, at a lone hair on the side of her chin. She was a slender woman, with young eyes and old wrinkles, with a fresh complexion and gray streaks in her hair. When she laughed her teeth reminded one of Phidias, who first combined gold and ivory with signal success. Carrie suddenly grew grave.

"Perhaps they have been waiting all their life-time to get married, Nell," she whispered solemnly.

"How romantic!" sighed Nellie.

There was a perceptible rush for the door of the cabin. Harry's eye, keen for amusement, noted

that some of the young girls were unconsciously stepping the cakewalk as they moved across the deck. Young and thoughtless persons recklessly left their chairs and joined the crowd pushing through the door. Others piled coats and baskets on them, or besought those who had no idea of leaving to hold their seats till they got back.

"I believe the vaudeville's on down below," cried Harry, springing up. "Come on, girls."

Carrie jumped erect and clapped her hands. Nellie rose with dignity.

"I don't care much for vaudevilles," she murmured. Then she sat down again. "You and Carrie go. I—I believe I'm seasick."

Harry leaned over her, whispering: "My poor darling! Can I do anything for you? Perhaps there's a doctor on board. Shall I get you some whisky, some champagne, something, anything?"

"Don't be silly," laughed Nellie, a laugh exactly like all her others, yet plainly indicating vexation this time. "Somebody'll hear you. I'll be all right. I'll sit still here. Go on, if you want to."

There was a tone of command in her voice, and Carrie was already firmly wedged in the throng that was crowding toward the cabin door.

"You're sure I can't do anything for you, dear?"

"Yes."

"You aren't very sick, darling?"

"No, no."

He went after Carrie, looking anxiously back every moment at his intended bride. Seizing the little "saleslady" by the waist, he pushed her through the crowd, using her thin body as a wedge. It was great sport, and they both laughed gaily. The stairway, at which they soon arrived, was packed. It was an inclined plane of human heads.

"I'll stump you to lie down on top of the heads and slide to the bottom," whispered Harry.

"Oh, aren't you comical!" screamed Carrie.

They forced their way to a step about half-way down, and listened. They could hear tantalizing laughter in the room below, but nothing else.

"You're little," suggested Harry; "scrooch down and tell me what you see."

Carrie did as commanded, and reported, "Only a big pair of feet. I guess a feller's singing a comic song. Gee! Wouldn't I like to hear him!"

"There's nothing in this," said Harry after a little, thinking of Nellie. "Let's go back."

As they passed the piano in the upper cabin, they found that a crowd of men had collected about it and were listening to a girl with bleached hair who

was pounding it noisily and singing a song. The men joined in the chorus with great enjoyment :

*You've all had 'em,  
You've all had 'em,  
And if you haven't had 'em,  
You'll have 'em by and by.*

Miss Vinne pinched Harry's arm. "Gee!" she exclaimed. "What would Nellie think of that?"

"Are you feeling better now, lovey?" asked Harry, sitting down again by Nellie's side.

She smiled at him, and he was unspeakably happy.

"She'll be in her own little nest to-night," he murmured, "and she needn't ever leave it again, if she don't want to."

As the day wore away, several of the couples, impatient of the slowness of the ship, became oblivious of their surroundings. A rosy Swedish maiden whose swollen hands were bulging in white cotton gloves, like the leaves of a bud in its out-grown shell, leaned with all her weight against her shock-headed lover. He was a slender prop for so much sweetness, but he braced himself manfully, looking defiantly happy. The woman with the old wrinkles and the young eyes sat hand in hand with her middle-aged adorer. A tall and ungainly

youth deliberately removed his sweetheart's straw hat and gently pulled her head upon his shoulder. She was a piquant brunette with short hair and a *retroussé* nose; she struggled faintly, and then sighed as she settled down to bliss and the feeling of being owned. A couple near the starboard wheel lost their heads and kissed each other passionately.

Poor Carrie Vinne went to the rail and leaned over, looking into the dark waters of the Lake. She felt herself alone.

A little boy, who had eaten cracker-jack and apples until his parents refused to give him more, grew fretful and bad. He cried and kicked his mother with his heavy shoes, whereupon his father seized him and administered two or three spanks upon his tightly-fitting trousers.

"Leave me be, leave me be!" he screamed, and his mother took him on her lap and comforted him.

At last the shore appeared, a long line of blue-gray sand, marked with triangular patches, like the hither side of a row of pyramids. There was a general rustling of paper and a bustle everywhere. Pop-corn bags were tucked into baskets, and sheets of the Sunday journals were shaken out and folded together. Young girls forged through the throng to find their mothers, and men rushed frantically below after the grips

which they had checked. The prospective brides stole away to the toilet rooms, smoothing out their ruffled feathers as they went. A dense throng gathered at the prow, gazing at the land of promise, still distant, leaving a few of the more experienced and less eager travelers in possession of the vacant seats. Carrie straightened and looked around with a sad smile.

"Come on," cried Harry; "we're almost there!"

Nellie arose leisurely, and the trio passed through the cabin toward the bow of the steamer. The "tough" young lady was still seated at the piano, surrounded by men. They had evidently been drinking, and they were singing with lugubrious earnestness:

"I don't know why I love you, but I do-oo-oo!"

## CHAPTER IX

### A HOME GARDEN

Mrs. Crissey was kneeling before a circular patch of bare earth in her front yard, setting out bulbs. It was a bright morning in early June, at the time of the year when lawns are greenest and trees leafiest. The sun fell lovingly on the rank grass, and a dewy freshness lingered in the shady places. A flock of white doves wheeled in the air and then fell like great snowflakes upon the green of a neighboring yard. The baby, her chubby legs lying athwart a circular border of pansies, was scraping up handfuls of black earth and pouring it through her fat fingers. Occasionally she rubbed her hands over her face and through her hair. Her sunbonnet, which she pulled off as fast and as often as her mother tied it on, lay beside her on the grass. Her great blue eyes, profoundly serious, were the only portion of her visible exterior which she had not succeeded in soiling.

One shoe and stocking lay near the discarded

hat, and the leg thus exposed was so fat that the foot seemed set upon the end of the calf without any ankle at all. Agnes Matilda was bringing earth from a bed that ran along the end of the house. She carried a tiny shovel in her hand and pulled after her a toy wagon, heaping full. Lucinda, her eyes restored by the amiable Chapin, lay on top of the load, with her face to the sun. The day being hot, Agnes Matilda had removed all of the doll's clothing, and its limp form, to any eye save that of imaginative childhood, looked strangely like a lilliputian corpse. Agnes wore a blue pinafore, reaching to a little above her knees, and a Mexican hat with a conical crown. She talked incessantly, stopping as often as her breath ran down to recover it with a gasp and to begin a new sentence or to repeat an insistent question. Her mother was answering the child mechanically, knowing that if she failed to respond at regular intervals, Agnes Matilda would call, "Mama, mama," until an answer was forthcoming.

When Mrs. Crissey looked up it could be seen that her face did not bear the strong morning light very well. Her figure was youthful; her light summer waist, with reddish stripes in it, and her big straw hat tied down over her ears, gave a jaunty, almost girlish effect. But there were wrinkles at



the corners of her eyes, and the fluff of hair that nestled under the eves of the big straw hat was powdered with gray.

Agnes Matilda ran one wheel of the toy wagon into a hole and cried, "Mama, come and help me; it's too hard." This demand called for an actual move on the mother's part, a result which she avoided by asking the little girl to run around the house and bring her the watering can.

"All—right," replied the child, dwelling on the first word for several seconds and bringing out the second with a jerk. In a few moments she returned from the errand, demanding, "Mama, where are the water can; mama, where are the water can?"

"Go and ask Lena," suggested Mrs. Crissey, and Agnes Matilda again disappeared. When she returned she was dragging the large tin bucket along by the spout, shouting triumphantly:

"Here it are, mama!"

There was an unnecessarily loud rattling in the kitchen, where Lena was washing the breakfast dishes and was singing a German song with the chorus ending in "*Numero, numero neun.*" Mrs. Crissey glanced anxiously from time to time in the direction of the music and its accompaniment, wondering how many dishes Lena was breaking.

Agnes Matilda, after poking the watering can in her mother's face, with the oft-repeated assertion, "Here it are," fretfully and at last angrily reiterated, returned to the wagon. The baby continued to sift dirt through its chubby fingers, infinitely contented.

"Come here and let me see if your ears are clean," called Mrs. Crissey, as Jim came through the screen door opening upon the porch. He was attired in knickerbockers and a short bicycle coat of blue; and a little plaid cap was set on the back of his head, exposing all of his freckled, fearless, impish face to the sun. He carried his books swinging like a pendulum at the end of a long strap, one end of which he had passed around his wrist.

"I don't want anybody poking 'round in my ears," he grumbled defiantly; "I guess I know how to wash my own ears."

"James," said the mother in a low, portentous tone, fixing her gray eyes on the boy, who advanced reluctantly. There was a deal of reserve force in Dorothy Crissey's nature, and she never shouted or "flew to pieces" when she intended to be obeyed. Seizing the boy by the lapel of his coat, she pulled him down toward her and dug a slender, searching finger into one of the convolutions of his ear.

"Ugh!" she exclaimed. "Aren't you ashamed of yourself? The teacher would certainly have sent you home, and I should have been mortified to death. You should have more respect for your father, if not for me. How would it sound if the neighbors should say that the son of Edward Crissey, alderman, had been sent home from school for dirty ears?"

"I guess the teacher wouldn't uv found any dirt," grumbled Jim, going back to the house. "There's a place there in my ear that nobody knows about but you."

"There's the po'man; there's the po'man!" cried Agnes Matilda, as the letter carrier entered the front gate, and she dashed down the walk toward him, swinging her doll by one leg. He gave the little girl four letters which she brought to her mother.

"I wonder why my sister doesn't write?" muttered Mrs. Crissey, looking at the superscriptions. "Here, Aggie dear; take these into the house. These three are for Lena, and this one is for your papa."

Five minutes later Edward Crissey came out, flushed with excitement and looking very handsome and manly in his morning costume—a high silk hat, and a dark sack suit, the vest of which was

cut very low, exposing a vast expanse of immaculate shirt bosom. But for his necktie, of some soft material with long, fluttering ends, one could almost have fancied him attired in a dinner coat. He held the letter, which he had just finished reading, between the tips of finger and thumb.

"Hello, Dolly!" he cried. "All at it, eh? The children'll soon have consumed the traditional peck of dirt at this rate. The baby here looks as though she had actually been rooting like a pig."

"She has, pretty nearly," replied Mrs. Dolly. "At least she has rolled over with her nose in the soft dirt two or three times. Who was your letter from, dear?"

Edward picked up the child and brought its soft body close to his face. "Boo!" he said. "I can't find a clean place anywhere to kiss." Putting the little one abruptly down, he added, "By-bye, Dolly; I have to rush off."

"Oh, papa, you didn't give me a kiss," shrieked Agnes Matilda.

"Well, come here, then. Hurry up."

He had gone but a few steps, when Agnes cried again, "You forget to give me a hug."

The hug was bestowed; and he had nearly reached the gate when the child flew frantically down the



The letter which he had  
just finished reading



walk, shouting in a high, shrill voice, "And a pat! and a pat! I want to pat you on your seek!"

The big man stooped down while a tiny hand patted his face, and a rosy, grimy cheek was upturned for a reciprocal caress. But Agnes Matilda was not yet satisfied.

"You never kissed mama! Oh, you never kissed my mama!" she cried reproachfully.

"That's so," laughed Crissey, turning back. "Come here, Dolly, I must make a clean job of it, or the child will never let me get away. One would suppose that I was going to Australia."

"Oh, don't delay on my account," replied Dolly, holding the watering can toward the sun, that she might see where the leak was. "We're getting too old for sentiment, anyway."

"Not a bit of it," cried her husband, in his genial, honest manner, not noticing the slight tone of reproach in Dolly's voice. "Come here and give me a kiss, quick. I have an important appointment at ten, and here it is a quarter past nine now." He held his watch in his hand as he kissed his wife. "What do you think? Here's Philip Murchison, the great railroad Magnate, wants to see me on business. When big railroad corporations begin to consult a lawyer, he can safely say that he's rising.

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Eh, Dolly? You'll wear diamonds yet." And he was gone. Dolly looked after him with admiring eyes. But she sighed as she went back to her watering can.

"Of course he'll rise, my noble, brilliant boy. But oh, if he only knew how much I prefer kisses to diamonds!"



## CHAPTER X

### A MISCALCULATION

Mr. Philip Murchison was a "magnate," the secret of whose great success lay in his ability to acquire valuable city franchises and concessions. The skill to buy men, with the complementary instinct as to what men are venal, is as auriferous a faculty as the ability to locate gold mines. Mr. Murchison sometimes made mistakes, it is true, but he regarded an exhibition of personal integrity in the light of an unforgivable insult, and he managed sooner or later to take revenge.

When this shark first swam into commercial waters he had little money and an unsavory reputation; but backers can always be found for those who have "business ability," and as for reputation—well, he did not come to officiate as pastor of a church or to engage in settlement work. He now rode in a private car and owned a controlling interest in two or three surface railways. It was even rumored that he had about sucked dry his

opportunities, and that he was planning an invasion of the city of Paris, which he hoped to disfigure with elevated tracks. He was a rather short, stout man, with iron-gray hair and mustache. He had a square, high forehead; shrewd, gray eyes with thinly penciled brows; thin, bloodless lips, reminding one of the lips of a fish; and a square chin. He made no friends among those who could not be of use to him. Such he dismissed in the most incisive manner and with an air of contemptuous annoyance that was positively insulting. In the case of those whom he hoped to use, his voice was caressing, with a flattering note. When talking with members of the swell society set, there was a touch of servility in his manner—for he had social aspirations. As a purely business venture he had acquired a great newspaper, through which he largely advertised his mysterious charities and the fact that he had founded a hospital. When a man's wealth passes a certain point, it is absolutely necessary for him to combat public discontent with a reputation for private and public benefactions—much advertised in a shrewd way.

Mr. Murchison, despite the fact that he was as devoid of human sympathy as a devilfish and as implacable as a shark, had one weakness, one failing; he was a libertine, and, like the poet Horace, he

enjoyed the society of chambermaids and servant girls. He dined frequently at the Park Club with ruddy-faced girls of robust figure and *gauche* manner. These were always magnificently attired, but they tottered unfamiliarly on high-heeled shoes, and their hands, when they removed their large gloves for dinner, were red and puffy, as though recently swollen by dish water. There were rumors of orgies on a private car and in the cabin of a Lake yacht, which did not tally with the keenness of the man's business eye, nor with the fishy coldness of his thin lips. Neither were these reports consonant with the editorials and news items in the Daily Interior, nor yet with the private charities and the benefactions to the hospital. But then, every great man is maligned more or less by envious tongues, and Mr. Murchison was very, very rich.

He was sitting in his private office, on the day after dictating a message to Alderman Crissey. He occupied a palatial suite of rooms in the Minnehaha. You enter one of the several doors under a brown-stone arch and confront a cage holding a half dozen elevators. Alderman Crissey took one of the elevators, which shot suddenly upward when the starter clacked his castanets. "Mr. Philip Murchison," said Crissey, not without conscious importance in

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his voice, and the car stopped so suddenly that the alderman felt a swooping in the pit of his stomach.

"To the right," said the boy; "number three hundred and seven."

Mr. Crissey entered the door of three hundred and seven and gave his card to a blond young woman who sat at a typewriter in one corner of the ante-room. He was immediately admitted to the presence of the Magnate, who rose from work at an imposing roll-top desk near a window, and greeted him with extended hand. Crissey noticed that the hand was cold and damp.

"Ah, Mr. Crissey, I'm glad to meet you at last," said the Magnate in his caressing voice. Crissey ran his fingers through his thick, white hair and set his silk hat carefully on the floor.

"Take a seat," continued the Magnate. "You'll find that arm-chair comfortable, I think. Do you smoke?" and he proffered a box of perfectos. Crissey accepted and lit one, finding it quite a revelation in the matter of tobacco; but he refused to drink, on the plea that it was too early in the day.

"Delightful summer we're having," observed the Magnate, taking in with one glance of almost superhuman cunning every detail of the manly countenance before him; the youthful cheeks, the gray

hair, the prominent strong nose, the frank fearless eye.

"Yes," replied Crissey; "confirms my opinion—that this is the pleasantest summer city in the United States. Nor have I any fault to find with the winters. Take it the year 'round, this town's good enough for me."

Murchison laughed pleasantly.

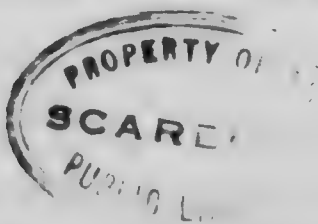
"You're a loyal citizen," he remarked, "and that makes my business with you all the easier—for me." Mr. Murchison never lost time. The face before him was not promising for his business, but it indicated that success, if gained at all, was only possible by a sharp and frank assault. Crissey looked at him inquiringly.

"You're a rising man, sir," affirmed Murchison.

"We all strive for success, sir," admitted the alderman.

"Yes, but we don't all get it. I have heard your name mentioned frequently of late, and always with the remark, 'Alderman Crissey is a rising man.' When things begin to come a man's way, the rest of his career is much easier than his earlier, struggling years. At least I have found it so in my own case."

"There is much truth in what you say, sir," re-



plied Crissey, much mystified; "I don't know that I should be glad to find that my struggles were all over, however. I am something of a fighter, myself. There is no greater joy than meeting obstacles and overcoming them."

And he stretched out his brawny arms as though proud of their strength.

Could it be that Murchison was about to offer him a position as attorney for his immense interests, at a salary that would send Jim to college and allow Dolly to ride in her own carriage? If so, he must think carefully before accepting. There was his political career, his moral and intellectual liberty.

"I like that," cried the Magnate enthusiastically. "I like a fighter." He lit a fresh cigar and faced the alderman frankly, crossing his legs. "You and I are much akin in that respect—and so are all successful men, I think, in this democratic country of ours. 'The strenuous life,' as Roosevelt calls it, that's the thing for us. But there are some struggles of such magnitude that they give a man opportunity to do all the fighting he cares for on his own account, and in which it is necessary to have as much powerful help as possible."

"For instance?" inquired Crissey, blowing out a

long stream of smoke, and leaving his mouth still puckered as though frozen there by attention.

"I have even heard Edward Crissey spoken of as a possible candidate for senator." The alderman started. This was his dearest ambition, one of the goals on which he had set his mind and to which he had determined to attain. But he did not intend to mention this ambition to any one until he saw its attainment more nearly within his grasp.

"I have no such hopes—at least, at present," he faltered.

He fancied that he began to see; some wealthy corporations wished to help him in his political career, perhaps even as far as the United States Senate ultimately, and own him. He was not deeply offended—he felt rather complimented; but he smiled faintly as he thought of the mistake that Murchison had made in his man. Own him! He knew that he could not be any man's man if he were to try. It was not in his nature.

"You wrote that you wished to see me on business," he said with considerable dignity.

"Take a fresh cigar," said the Magnate, proffering the box a second time. "No? Put one in your pocket. Well, I'll come right to the point. Your time's valuable as well as mine. I am, as you know,

interested in telephones. You know also that there is great popular discontent with the service here. People refuse to believe that the company is doing its best under the circumstances, and they wonder—and justly—why such a high rate as ten cents is charged for the public instruments. Now it is necessary for some intelligent, public-spirited, practical men, who have something to say in the matter, to understand wherein lies the real difficulty. To conduct a great business like this, it is necessary for the company to be on a safe and permanent basis. The franchise under which we operate expires now in a very few years, and, in view of the public discontent, we lack confidence in ourselves, and we fail to inspire the confidence of capital.

“What we need is a renewal of our franchise for a long term of years, say fifty. Then our stock would go booming, and we should feel justified in putting more money into the business—could get more money for it. What would be the inevitable result? Better apparatus, newer appliances, more expensive and capable employees, cheaper service.

“We could guarantee, with a good long extension, to reduce the yearly rates immediately, and to put the public rates at half what they now are. Is there any reason why a man should put his hand



into his pocket and drop ten cents into the slot every time he wishes to tell his wife he won't be home to dinner? No, sir; we admit that it is an outrage. But what can we do about it? The company is losing money as it is. With an extension of franchise, we could make money on a five-cent rate now. Perhaps," and here the Magnate grew enthusiastic, "we could allow people to telephone after four or five years for one penny!"

"And you wish me—"

"I'm coming to that. You are just the man to support us in the city Council. The Legislature has already been—we have the Legislature with us, as you know. You would be a tower of strength to us in the Council. Your well-known integrity, your unimpeachable character, your eloquence, your commanding influence, would insure us victory. Your support would give the lie to all those who see a 'job' in every measure for the public interest. Your reward? For we must always think of number one, if only incidentally. Your reward would consist in increased popularity. You would always be spoken of as the alderman who gave the people cheaper and better telephones. Then, too," and here Crissey felt that the Magnate's eyes were searching his very soul, "you would be associating yourself with a number of wealthy and influential

men who would come to know you as a friend, and who would help you on your onward and upward course."

Crissey sat quietly smoking, looking at the toe of his right boot, for several minutes. The Magnate watched him.

"I have no faith in his philanthropic motives," thought the alderman. "He's for Philip Murchison first, last, and all the time. I've got him! I'll hint at a bribe. He wouldn't want to bribe a man for philanthropic motives."

He looked up at the Magnate.

"Business is business, Mr. Murchison. The reward which you suggest is—ah—hardly tangible enough; hardly immediate enough."

The Magnate gave a sudden start, and his face brightened.

"How much do you want?" he asked bluntly. His voice assumed a familiar tone, with a slight suspicion of contempt, as though he were addressing a servant. "I am prepared to give you a check for a certain sum in advance, with a promise of a still greater amount after our ordinance passes the Council. But don't hit us too hard, for there are others besides yourself."

The color fled from Crissey's cheeks, and there

was a dangerous light in his eye. He put his silk hat on his head and rose to his feet.

"I thought you wished to see me on business," he said, controlling his voice admirably, save for a high note at the end of the sentence. "Good day, sir."

He walked toward the door, but just before he opened it he was seized with uncontrollable rage.

"If this interview had occurred in my office, sir," he said, turning toward the Magnate and shaking his fist at him, "I should have kicked you downstairs—you damned scoundrel!" And he was gone.

"You think you're a rising man," shouted Murchison at the closed door through which the burly form had just disappeared. "We'll see how fast you'll rise! You sanctimonious idiot, you!"

## CHAPTER XI

### CULTURE IN A FLAT

The Chapins took a flat of six rooms on George Avenue, near the Lake. There are few flats in this locality of the North Side, but Harry, from the nature of his business, was posted regarding opportunities—"snaps" he called them. A German woman, a divorcee of three years' standing, owned the building, which, with another property in the neighborhood, represented the price of her liberty. The proprietor lived on the ground floor with her son, who played the violin and did something or other at the Board of Trade. Harry and his wife occupied the middle flat, and the Roth family the upper. Victor Roth was a bookkeeper in Murchison's office, and it was through him that the Magistrate learned who Nellie was. Thus do the romances of this work-a-day, scheming, wicked, good old world of ours work themselves out. Happy the man who with simple faith can see the hand of a wise and benevolent God controlling the threads of all our various destinies!

Roth was a fat, blue-eyed German, quiet and industrious. He was an uxorious husband, who never made a mistake in his accounts, and whose fat, pink hand traced most beautiful chirography. He was haunted by a servile fear, for his family's sake, lest he lose his position. All day, while at work, he saw behind his ledger the faces of his wife, his beautiful daughter, and his two babies, as plainly as though they were represented in a photographic group upon his desk. He hastened home as soon as the day was done, kissed his wife, and caught his youngest baby to his breast. He could often be seen on George Avenue wheeling a baby carriage up and down.

Mrs. Roth's father lived with the family, an old German who played the organ in a church and fished in the Lake. Evalina, the sixteen-year-old girl, was keeping company with a nice young man from Evanston, who appeared regularly every Sunday night. Mrs. Roth, who had been a dressmaker before she became a wife, managed to keep Evalina dressed nicely, even stylishly. The girl had a slender figure, flaxen hair, the features of a Dresden china doll, and very blue eyes. She wore big hats of the Gainsborough type, and affected a long curl which dangled over her right shoulder. She was not musical, but she practised the latest or most

popular piece all the week that she might play it on Sunday night to her young man. When practising she always made the same mistake at the same place, and then commenced again at the beginning. Harry, who had a musical ear, listened with amusement to Evalina during the joyous days of his honeymoon. On Sunday nights, when Evalina played the piece of the week to her beau, she made the mistake as usual, but kept right on to the end. "The Spanish Serenade" from "Arizona," "The Fox Hunter's March" and "The Intermezzo" from the "Cavalleria Rusticana," were her favorites about the time when the Chapins moved into the neighborhood.

Harry's days began immediately to assume a marked sameness as soon as he settled down. He was awakened every morning by hearing the rattling of milk bottles in a rack; at which sound Mrs. Roth jumped upon the floor above his head with a thump that sounded as though some heavy body had fallen from a height, and ran out toward the kitchen, shaking the entire house at every step. Somebody had once stolen her milk. Then the neighbor on the side toward the Lake, a wealthy grocer who lived in his own house, called his Danish hound, which the hired girl had turned out of doors a few minutes before. "Here, Beaut! Here, Beaut!" he shouted,

the "here" in a cracked falsetto, the "Beaut" in a deep guttural. A few moments later the grocer's wife called her little boy, a very early riser, into the house to have his face washed. "Joey—Joey—" she cried, dwelling long on the last syllable—a cry like that of a bird. Soon after, the Scully boys, four in number, burst noisily into the street, and turned their three dogs loose from the barn. The consequent barking and shouting indicated that it was seven o'clock in the morning and that the day had actually begun.

Then Harry rose and began to dress, and Nellie, stepping into a pair of slippers and donning a warm red kimono which had replaced the faded blue garment of the lodging-house, went out and made the coffee. She looked very attractive in her partial dishabille, with her great mass of red-gold hair tumbled about her face; and Harry drank the pale, tasteless coffee which she concocted with perfect contentment. They had been married in June, and this was the first of September. A woman does not allow herself to get off her guard as to her personal appearance in a man's eyes at three months' living with him; neither does he begin to detect the flat taste in her coffee. With love for cream, any coffee is good.

Immediately after breakfast Harry kissed his

wife and went up the shady street to the Evanston Avenue car, with fifty cents in his pocket, ten for car fare and the rest for a bakery lunch. He whistled the latest "coon" song as he went. At night he hurried home, to partake of fried steak or chops, a cup of tea, and a piece of bakery pie. If Nellie had been detained too long at her French lesson, she bought something cold at the convenient delicatessen. For Nellie's yearning to cultivate her mind had brooked no delay. She had immediately joined a French class that convened afternoons at the Newberry Library; and she had promised already to join the Garden City Club, an organization of women that met twice a month at the Masonic Temple, and discussed matters of art, literature, psychology, travel, politics, religion, archaeology and other subjects. Nellie knew one of the members of this club, and through her had obtained an invitation to join. She had also taken up Browning, Ibsen and Maeterlinck, and was industriously storing her mind with many detached sayings which seemed to her bright or profound, that she might use them in conversation as soon as she got fairly launched in the world of wit and progress.

Harry was extremely proud of the French lessons, and the fried steak in his own house tasted



delicious to him—a fact which proves that love is palateless as well as blind, for in his pre-nuptial days Harry had been fond of camembert cheese, English chops and Ma'am Galli's spaghetti.

The Chapins' flat, for which they paid thirty-five dollars a month, faced George Avenue. The rooms were small, and the bedroom was dark. The parlor was papered in deep green, with a peacock blue border, and the dining room in dark red—a sort of tomato-sauce effect. The furniture had that air of newness about it which always attaches to the chattels of newly married couples. All the sets were complete as yet—six high-backed chairs in the dining room; a willow set in the parlor; four wooden chairs and a table in the kitchen; an imitation oak bureau, a white iron bed with brass knobs, and two cane-seated chairs in the bedroom. There was a center table in the parlor, on which Nellie conspicuously disposed the latest novels—"The Crisis," "The Eternal City," "D'ri and I," as well as her "French Course," her Browning, and her Omar Khayyám. A few of Harry's bachelor things were scattered about, and looked alien and ill at ease amid their surroundings. The tottering tobacco table, with three legs, most constant of all the inanimate friends of his youth, sulked in a dark corner of

the bedroom, and upon it lay neglected copies of George Ade's "Fables" and "Billy Baxter's Letters."

On the day when Murchison first saw Nellie, she was returning about five o'clock from the French lesson at the Newberry Library. She was stylishly attired in a brown tailor-made dress, and wore a shirt-waist hat, slightly tilted over her forehead. It was bound with brown tape, was wound about with silk of a lighter brown, and there was a broad quill thrust jauntily across the front. Nellie was with a little bevy of older women, all of whom were talking together about Paris, the Quartier Latin, "Trilby," and the French language. One could hear frequently above the vocal hubbub and the rattle of the car shrieks of, "*Oui, oui*," "*N'est-ce pas?*" "*Non, non*," and "*Je crois que oui*," hopelessly pronounced.

Most of these ladies were well along in life, and several of them bore the marks of a laborious youth. Two or three, with huge dictionaries on their laps, were studying "methods," a look of puzzled desperation on their features. The women were all either very fat or very thin, and they gave one the impression of having lived one life and of having started out upon another. Though neatly

dressed for the most part, they seemed somehow to have risen above the feminine love of dress. They served as foils for Nellie's chic and voluptuous beauty. Murchison, sitting in a corner of the car with Roth, moistened his thin lips with his tongue as he gazed furtively at her. The Magnate was conversing pleasantly with his man concerning the weather and other inconsequential subjects. It was his policy to be popular with his employees, and to attach as many of them to him personally as possible. He was really a business genius—was Murchison, and he knew that one cheerful employee was worth a dozen who were sullen. He had, moreover, a horror of strikes.

Roth was trembling with delight. In this affability of the great man he saw security in his position and a possible advance of salary. He was aching to get home, give his plump little wife an extra hug, and tell her all about the chance meeting which seemed to mean so much to them all. He had already planned a picnic in Lincoln Park for the very next Sunday. The Roths were great picnickers.

Nellie descended at George Avenue and walked briskly down the shady street. Murchison, coming after her with Roth, noticed that she carried

herself well and that she lifted her dress gracefully, disclosing a silk petticoat which seemed to whisper of dainty ankles.

"This is the most beautiful street in this city," Roth chattered joyously. "My wife and I are very contented. See how beautiful is the view from here." Though he knew English perfectly and could write it without error, there was an occasional twist to his sentences when he talked that betrayed the German. "There are trees the whole length, making a vista, and at the end a bit of the Lake gleams like a mirror. It is just like the country here. Two men own the whole of the street, and they will not sell, so there are few houses on it built. There are many lilacs in front of that house. In the spring they smell sweet. That is a wild grape-vine yonder, growing over a dead tree. See how green and luxuriant it is. And the grapes are good, too. My wife makes jelly of them. We have such sport gathering them! The whole family comes with a basket."

"That's a fine-looking woman ahead of us," hazarded Murchison. "Is she a neighbor of yours?"

"Yes, that's Mrs. Chapin—our bride. She lives in the flat below us. We live in the top flat. We have a view of the Lake. You ought to see it from

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That's a fine-looking  
woman, ahead of us.



our kitchen window. My wife and I look at it for hours. It has so many expressions as a man—as the face of God. On stormy days it is wild and terrible, tumbling, tumbling, as far as the eye can see. When the day is still and the sun shines, it smiles as though the whole world were smiling. Our kitchen is a wonderful place, Mr. Murchison. *Wunderschön*, my wife and I call it. You have also a view of the Lake, I believe, Mr. Murchison?"

"Yes; all my front windows look out upon it. I have bought the riparian rights, to prevent anybody from building in front of me and spoiling my view."

"Ah, then your front rooms are just as pleasant as our kitchen! There is where we live—where Mrs. Chapin is just going in. That is my little boy coming to meet me."

"Ah," said Murchison, "he's a fine little fellow. What does her husband do for a living?"

"Whose husband? Oh, Harry Chapin. He's connected with a real estate firm—Blodgett and Blodgett. Hello, Fritz! Come on, Fritz! Oop-te-day!" And Roth tossed a flaxen-haired child of three years several times from the walk to the length of his arms.

"What did you bought me, papa; what did you bought me? Did you bought me anything?" in-

quired the child, trying to reach his tiny hand into his father's side-pocket.

"He is indeed a fine lad," repeated the Magnate, putting his hand on the boy's head while he glanced at Chapin's front window. "Here, my boy, is ten cents. You can go and buy yourself some candy."

"What do you say, Fritz?" prompted Roth, stooping low and whispering in the child's ear. The father was very anxious that Fritz should show his training; but the boy broke away and ran into the hall.

"Fritz! Fritz!" called the father.

"Ah, there's Mrs. Chapin at the window now," observed the Magnate. "She's looking in a book. She's evidently interested in books."

"I should say so! She is studying French, and she belongs to a woman's literary club—The Garden City I believe they call it. You see, this is just like a country town out here. We all know everything about each other's business."

"Well, good night, Mr. Roth," said Murchison. "Give my regards to your good wife."

This last show of interest was almost more than the simple, kindly-hearted, imaginative Roth could bear. He felt as though God were too good to him. He caught his boy in his arms and bounded up the stairs two steps at a time.



## CHAPTER XII

### A STEIN ON THE TABLE

The first summer of Harry's wedded bliss passed away, and autumn came in a single night. Only last evening there was a merry throng of bathers at the beach near the foot of George Avenue. Roth sat on a bench till ten o'clock watching the ships go by, far out in the Lake. The "Whaleback," the "Virginia," he knew them all by the arrangement of their lights—for all that could be seen of them at that hour consisted of lines and clusters of electric lights moving over the face of the waters. He knew where they came from and whither they were going; and he loved, as he smoked his five-cent cigars, to imagine himself and his wife sailing away somewhere together; down the castle-gemmed Rhine, in the sky-blue Mediterranean, starred with islands, along the Dalmatian coast, fringed with white villages. Mr. Roth smoked five-cent cigars with much satisfaction because he had actually brought himself to believe that they were better

than the more expensive varieties. He always took his wife with him on his imaginary sailings for the reason that he thought her the most beautiful and desirable woman on earth. He smoked his cigar on summer evenings by the Lake front because the acrid smell set the baby to coughing and waked it up. He would have foregone the luxury entirely, but his wife would not permit the sacrifice.

Only last night the air was sultry and a great, straw-colored harvest moon looked down on a world of fairy waters, of young lovers strolling in the shadow, of murmurings and soft laughter beneath the trees. Only yesterday the toilers in the heart of the great plutonic city were sweltering and gasping in the heat, and the columns of smoke floated to heaven luridly in a yellow glare of sun. To-day men walking on the streets felt a ring of cold about their ankles above their low shoes, and wondered if their last year's light overcoats would do. The chariots of a great wind had swept across the Lake during the night, with much thundering of onward driven waves; and the slanting lances of the rain fell for hours. The rafts and logs of the swimmers had been tossed wantonly ashore, and some of the benches nearest the beach were beaten into kindling wood.

Harry and Roth came home on the same car

and walked together from the barns through a light, silvery drizzle. The men, though as different mentally as it is possible for two men to be, were fast friends. Their hearts and their love of human companionship was their point of contact. So it is possible for real friendship to exist between people who do not speak the same language.

"Well, we'll have to get our fall overcoats out of hock!" laughed Harry.

"Is your overcoat in pawn?" asked Roth, sympathetically. "Perhaps I could loan you some or a part for a few days. I will ask my wife."

"No, thanks," replied Harry. "I was only joking. I meant that summer is actually over at last. Isn't that a lonely prospect, though?" he asked, looking in at the gate of a summer garden. "They'll hardly do any more business this year."

Each table was tipped, with one end resting on a chair. The chairs were grouped about the tables all slantingly, so that the rain should run off from their seats. The tawdry curtain was taken down, disclosing a bare and cheerless stage. A few yellow leaves, which had fallen from one of the trees that justified the name of "garden," were brushed into a wet, dank heap. The place looked as though a wind had swept through it, had tipped up the furniture, and torn away the curtain.

"I never bring my wife and family to this place," observed Roth; "it is not quite respectable."

"I haven't been to a summer garden since I was married," said Harry, with an almost imperceptible sigh. "She does not care for such things. She does not think they improve the mind. I used to go to the Bismarck a good deal before I was married, and I even came here once in a while. Josey Gregory used to sing here. She was a peach—funnier than a goat. Ever hear her sing 'Georgie, Georgie, Next Time You Drink, You'll Drink with Me'?"

"N—no. I don't believe I ever have."

"You ought to hear her. But maybe you don't enjoy that sort of thing. I do, when I'm tired—sort of rests a man. But you can't get out of a place like this without spending a dollar or two. You're sure to meet some one you know, and he'll set 'em up, and then you feel like a beat if you don't ask him to take something, and every flip out of the box means a quarter. When a man's married he must drop all that. He owes it to his wife, too."

"Then he just begins to enjoy life, is it not so?" cried Roth. "For 'e and his wife can enjoy things together, and he takes double pleasure in knowing that she is having a good time."

As they passed down George Avenue, the Ger-

man stooped and picked up a dead butterfly. "Look," he cried; "here is the surest sign that summer is over. The life of these little creatures with summer time ends. You will see them flitting about for several days longer, slower, slower every day, as the life of summer itself ebbs. The first sharp frost will kill them, all that are left alive. See how this one has the true autumn tints in his wings! Above is a dull red, as though the embers of a dying fire were glowing through smoke. And here, on the under side, his wings are the dead golden hue of the sky just after sunset—and do not these bars look like the limbs of a leafless tree standing against a patch of sky?"

"You ought to be a poet!" laughed Harry. "You talk like a book that my wife was reading from the other evening."

"I have some poems written," said Mr. Roth modestly, "but they are mere nothings. If I could write all I feel, perhaps they would be better. Did you hear the tree-toads last night?"

"No."

"Well then, you will not be likely to hear them again this year. They are the last chorus of summer. You will hear the silver chirp of a cricket here and there for several days, perhaps weeks longer. When the white aspens in the park twinkle

in the cool breezes, when greenish-yellow leaves begin to drift and swirl on the walks, and lone butterflies, whose mates are dead, wander through the gray air, then you feel that summer is over and gone. Then in your heart you a strange sadness feel, a faint longing as for a beautiful clime or country that you have loved and to which you must say farewell. For summer and winter, those are two different countries, are they not?"

"I should say that there's difference enough here between summer and winter," assented Harry. "One doesn't have to be a poet to see that."

They ran up the stairs together, and Harry found a note from Nellie pinned to his door. It read:

"Dear Harry, we are to have a lecture on French literature this afternoon, in the French language, by Professor Max Hennequin, of Paris, and after that we are all to take tea at Mrs. Balcom's. During tea nothing but French will be spoken, and the professor will be with us. You will find twenty-five cents in the vase on the mantel, and you had better go down to that nice little restaurant opposite the Lessing and get your supper. Be a good boy. I'll be home early.

"Yours affectionately,

"NELLIE."

"I say, old man, listen to this!" Harry cried after Roth. "Isn't my wife right in it?" and the proud husband read the letter to the German.

"Mrs. Chapin is indeed an intellectual woman," affirmed Roth with conviction, "and you have just cause to be proud of her. And now you must come up to supper with us."

Harry did not demur. He felt a little lonely, and the prospect of eating with that loving and cheerful family appealed to him. Besides, he had formed a great liking for Fritz.

"Mama, I have brought Mr. Chapin up to supper with me," said Roth, opening the door.

There was a loud shout in the kitchen of, "Oh, papa! Ho, papa!" And an astonishing clatter, as Fritz poured an armful of assorted playthings on the floor. Then he came running down the hall, shouting, "What did you bought, papa? What did you bought me?" His tiny feet made an alternate clatter and thud on the bare floor, showing plainly that he had one shoe on and one shoe off.

When he burst into the room he produced the feeling of surprise that so small a person could make so much noise. He was a beautiful, sturdy little fellow, with flaxen hair, big blue eyes, and the face of a fat cherub. He wore little blue trousers, reaching to the knees and buttoned to a red waist.

Both his chubby legs were bare, for, though he wore his right shoe, the stocking had come loose and fallen down over it.

"What did you bought me?" he repeated as his father picked him up.

"His father spoils him," said Mrs. Roth, who, after nodding genially to Harry, hurriedly gathered up two or three articles that tended to make the room look untidy and tossed them into the sleeping room. "He brings him something home nearly every night."

She was a plump little woman, with an abundance of soft brown hair. Her face was somehow attractive, despite the fact that it was badly pock-marked. The features were those of the better type of Austrian peasant—brow broad and low, lips and nose rather thick. She wore a gray dress that did not fit her very well, and her form was such as Byron probably means when he says "a dumpy woman." Her voice was sweet as a lullaby, and, as Harry soon learned, she spoke but seldom. Her eyes were hazel—shy and tender—those of a loved and loving woman.

Roth gave Fritz a glass marble, too big for the boy to get in his mouth. Then he seized his wife about the waist, grunting playfully as though it



meant to squeeze her to death, and kissed her squarely on the lips.

"Haven't you got any sense?" she giggled, blushing like a girl.

"Well, sit down, Mr. Chapin," said Roth. "It's just as cheap as standing. Whew, I have an appetite like one dog. Frieda, see if there's two bottles of German champagne on the ice."

"Let I go wiv you, mama. Let I go wiv you," cried Fritz, seizing his mother's dress and following in her wake. A moment later he returned shouting, "There's free, four, six, eight bottlings."

"Oh, you little rascal!" laughed Roth. "You have not much idea given. I think I'll have to go and see for myself. Come out into the kitchen, Mr. Chapin, and see the view from our window there. We are very lucky to have this top flat because the next house doesn't shut off our view."

Mrs. Roth stood at the kitchen table, with her sleeves rolled up, making a potato salad. Her arms were round and pretty. Harry thought of one night at Mrs. Hutchins' when he and Nellie made potato salad together, and that strange thrill went through him again which he had felt at the touch of the red-gold hair upon his cheek. He looked at little Fritz standing on a chair beside Mrs. Roth

and trying to get his chubby hands into the salad, and a great longing for children, for a family of his own, came over him.

"See what a full sweep of the Lake we get from this window," said Roth. "Down town now, the great buildings are all enveloped in a dim leaden pall, and the black, tumbled clouds from the sky come down and mingle with the smoke that from the city rises. The buildings look like ghosts of buildings, formed out of the mist and smoke—so dark gray they are, so like in color to the day. But here is the clean Lake and the slanting rain. And see, the evening sun gleams through, and all the lead to silver turns. The Lake and the sky mingle together in a soft mist out yonder, and if you watch, sometimes you can see a sailing vessel melt into it and so disappear. There, there goes one now! Wouldn't you like to take your wife and sail away on it, away, away? Come on, *mein Schatz!*"

"My wife don't like the Lake for a cent," said Harry. "It makes her sea-sick. We haven't been over to St. Joe since we were married."

"Maybe Mr. Chapin can't eat what we've got," observed Mrs. Roth. "Soup, frankfurters and potato salad, and home-made *strudel*."

"Try me and see!" cried Harry. "I don't think I shall back away from that bill of fare."

"Why, that's a meal for the kaiser!" cried Roth.

Harry enjoyed that dinner. Grandpa Roth and Evalina came in on time, and they were seven, all told, counting the baby, who woke up and was wheeled into the dining room in its carriage. Evalina looked very chic and American, and her curl gave her a coquettish air. The old man was chiefly remarkable for his vast amount of gray, disheveled hair, which seemed to grow with equal profusion on his face and his head. He had mastered the English language fairly well with the exception of the verb. He persisted in using the past tense with such auxiliaries as *did*. "Didn't I told you so?" was a favorite expression of his. He pulled the baby carriage around near him, where he could reach it with his hand and move it to and fro if the little one showed any signs of uneasiness. He devoted much of his time during the dinner to amusing the baby.

"That's grandpa's baby," observed Evalina. "He named it himself and won't hardly let anybody else look at it."

"What did you call it?" Harry asked the old man.

"Bismarck Goethe," replied grandpa proudly.

"Bismarck Goethe Roth, after the two greatest men that ever lived!"

"It's a splendid name," agreed Harry. "He can't help making his mark with a handle like that."

"There, didn't I told you so? You see what this gentleman thinks?"

"It's too absurd," giggled Evalina. "I'm glad you didn't name me. I wonder what ridiculous combination you'd have found for me?"

"I wouldn't take the trouble to name a girl," replied the old man disdainfully. "I don't have to," he added proudly.

"You's sittin' in a high chair, and I'se sittin' in a high chair, just like a 'zackly as you," observed Fritz inconsequentially.

"What do you eat?" asked Harry. "Does mama give you sausage?"

"Oh, he eats everything," replied Mrs. Roth. "This is his dinner that I am fixing now. Here, papa, pass Fritz his dinner."

"Hoo, such a big much, such a big much!" cried Fritz, delightedly. And, taking his spoon, he carefully separated the different items on his plate.

"Don't do that, Fritz," commanded his father. "What a naughty trick that is. You'll push all your food on to the table. The potato doesn't hurt the sausage."

Fritz turned to Harry chanting: "Pittayters don't hurt sausage, sausage don't hurt beans, beans don't hurt pittayters—" Then he stopped and studied the plate. Being unable to master further the

subject of mathematical combinations, he compromised by stuffing an enormous spoonful of potato salad into his mouth.

Harry laughed immoderately. "He's as bright as a dollar!" he cried.

After dinner Fritz stood upon the step of his high chair and invited Harry, "Feel if my tum-mick's full." Harry complied, and announced that it was as full as a tick.

"That's a ceremony that his grandfather usually performs," ventured Evalina.

After supper there was music in the front parlor. Roth sang two or three sentimental German songs, and responded to an encore with "Just a Song at Twilight." The old man, who was a genuine musician, played Schubert's serenade exquisitely, and Mendelssohn's "Spring Song."

About ten o'clock Harry heard Nellie come in, and at the invitation of the entire Roth family, he ran down to invite her up. Her cheeks were flushed with excitement and with exercise, and Harry thought he had never seen her looking more beautiful. She positively refused to go up to the Roths', however.

"They're common people," she said, taking off her hat and thrusting the long pin through it. "There's nothing to be learned from them. And

what a lot of children they have! That woman would have made a good Eve. She's capable of being the mother of the whole human family."

Harry thought this remark very bright, but it jarred upon him.

Fortunately, he did not know that Nellie had heard a vicious woman say the same thing that very afternoon, à propos of an acquaintance who had recently become a mother.

## CHAPTER XIII

### AT THE PIERIAN SPRING

By the time Nellie was married two years she became a prominent member of the Garden City Club; and she even read two papers before that strenuous body, one on "Kipling Compared with Macaulay as a Writer of Ballads," and another on "The Art and Literature of Ancient Athens." She devoted a month to the preparation of the second paper, and won much praise for the thoroughness with which she covered the field. It was during this month that both she and Harry became convinced of the necessity of hiring a domestic. This was the epoch, too, of her career when she first contracted the habit of wearing a long lead pencil stuck through her chignon. In these two years Nellie grew so brilliant that her admirers occasionally wondered how such an intellectual woman ever came to marry so ordinary a person as Chapin.

It was Nellie who suggested the idea of giving a "Poets' Night" at the club. After considerable cor-

respondence, for Nellie had arisen to the dignity of secretary, five men and a woman who had actually published volumes of verse agreed to appear and read from their writings. When the evening arrived an unusually large throng gathered in the lodge room hired by the club. For at least thirty minutes before eight o'clock the lifts of the Masonic Temple were shooting loads of humanity up through their long shafts to the twelfth floor, and the ladies of the club were crowding the ante-room, eager to receive the complaisant poets and to overwhelm them with welcome and adulation. Among these was Nellie, tall and gracious.

Excitement added color to her cheeks, but the nervousness of the first days of club life had given place to the queenly dignity and the majestic poses of the cloak model. She profited unconsciously by this training, though that dreadful period was to her now little more than an unpleasant dream.

Poor Carrie Vinne had long ago been made to feel that she belonged to a past which Nellie wished to forget.

At ten minutes past eight every seat in the club room was filled, as well as the benches along the wall. The Madam President sat at a desk, nervously fingering the handle of a gavel, and Nellie, proud and confident, was by her side. The poets, safely



corralled, sat in a line on a bench in front of the platform, and a smile of triumph overspread the Madam President's features as she gazed fondly down upon them. At ten minutes past eight the lady looked at her watch and tapped sharply on the desk. She arose, and announced in a clear business-like tone:

"The meeting will now come to order. We will wait no longer for our famous poet, Mr. Bruce Rye, who promised to be with us this evening. Doubtless Mr. Rye is at this moment in the throes of composition—is writing out one of those sublime masterpieces which have made his name a household word wherever the English language is spoken, and has forgotten his promise to be with us. In any case we must excuse him, for we all know that poets are not like us common mortals and must not be held accountable for their actions. [Ripples of laughter and much craning of necks to see if the corralled poets were also laughing.] But there is no reason why this audience should be kept waiting longer. We have with us to-night an aggregation of genius such as has never before appeared under one roof in America. [More craning of necks to see if any of the poets were blushing. Suppressed applause.] This is a proud night for the Garden City Club. No other club in the West has

ever offered such a feast of reason, such a flow of soul, as awaits this club to-night and its distinguished guests—for I see in the audience some of the most distinguished citizens of this city."

Every one present not a member looked conscious. There was a rustling and a scraping of feet as people in the front rows looked over their shoulders. Many eyes were focused upon Mr. Philip Murchison, who was a frequent guest, and was present upon this red-letter evening.

"But I will not keep you waiting longer than is necessary. The secretary will read the minutes of the last meeting." The Madam President sat down. She was a plump, dark woman, fifty years of age, dressed in black. Very short white gloves constricted her fat, red wrists just above the base of the thumb, as though strangling them. She had snapping black eyes, and she spoke with much confidence and equal fluency.

Nellie arose, and a faint whisper, tributary to her beauty, was heard in different parts of the room. Women were saying: "Isn't she beautiful?"

"Just lovely!"

"Such a stately creature!"

"What a magnificent figure!"

Two pairs of eyes were fixed upon her face so intently that she did not dare look up from her paper

for fear of losing her place. They belonged to two men who were inexpressibly bored by the intellectual inducements of the club, but who came there frequently just to see Nellie. These were Mr. Philip Murchison, Magnate, and Mr. Gifford Dare, artist. The latter had but recently made her acquaintance, and the former had not as yet hit upon any plan for seeing her elsewhere.

"Rooms of the Garden City Club, December seventh, nineteen hundred," read Nellie. "Madam President in the chair. The meeting was called to order at eight sharp. Minutes of the preceding meeting were read and approved. The Madam President then introduced Mr. Charles Denton, who entertained the club and its guests with an amusing account of his recent trip up the Nile River, in Egypt. Mrs. Susan Phenix moved that the thanks of this club be extended to Mr. Denton for his courtesy in appearing before this club and giving it a very pleasant and instructive evening. Motion seconded and carried. There being no other business, the session adjourned at nine fifteen."

"If there are no objections the minutes will stand approved," said the Madam President. No one seeming to have the least objection, she declared them so approved.

"And now," she continued, taking a deep breath

and throwing her head back a little, "I have the honor of introducing to you, ladies and gentlemen, our great epic poet, Mr. Walter Clancy, whose name is as familiar in England as it is in America. Mr. Clancy has kindly consented to favor us with a few of the epics from his latest volume of verse, entitled 'The Echoing Streets.'"

Nellie took advantage of the expectant ripple of applause following this announcement to glide into the audience, that she might face the geniuses as they read or recited, and that she might not lose the flashes of soul that would be sure to speak in their eyes and upon their countenances. In this vigilance she was joined by all the other ladies in the room, all grimly determined that not the least manifestation of soul should escape. It was a veritable soul hunt.

Mr. Clancy was a stoutish man, whose baldness gave the effect of an extremely high, intellectual forehead. His hair grew on each side of a white channel, like grass on the banks of a river. A few long locks, combed across for the purpose of innocent deception, suggested to the imaginative mind trees fallen from bank to bank. He laid his book on the high table provided, upon which he rested one hand. The other hand he set on his thigh, the arm akimbo, and he threw his right leg across

his left, so that the right foot stood perpendicularly upon the toes. His whole attitude expressed confidence.

The ladies did not fail to notice that he had large expressive eyes. One member who sat on the front bench gave audible voice to her thoughts in a running series of ejaculations. She was a fat woman, with a round face, and eyes of the variety familiarly known as "pop." A disproportionate amount of white gave them a bulging appearance, and she had a startling way of jerking them about in her head as though they were worked by means of springs. At every ocular jerk she smiled appreciatively, as though she had espied a new genius.

Mr. Clancy was a socialistic poet, who wrote really fine verses inspired by sympathy for the poor and the erring. He was very much in earnest, and as his sonorous tones rang through the room this lady's voice could be distinctly heard in running comment:

"There's beauty!" "There's sympathy!" "There's pathos!" "There's soul!"

After Mr. Clancy had finished, the president arose and said: "It is not necessary to make any comment upon Mr. Clancy's performance. It speaks for itself. And now I have the honor and pleasure of introducing to you a man whose name is as well

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known in America and England as that of Thomas Hood or John G. Saxe. Mr. William Fish will next favor us. Mr. Fish should really have come a little later on the program. I put him farther down that we might enjoy longer the pleasures of anticipation, but he has begged me to make this change, as he has to catch a train."

The gentleman in question was not sitting on the seat with the other celebrities. He had remained back in the audience, and as he advanced he made great show of stumbling several times. When he at last stepped upon the stage he remarked, "I caught several trains just now," and waited a moment to see if any explanation were necessary. To his great satisfaction, a ripple of laughter greeted the joke, which was an old stand-by of his; and the lady on the front seat exclaimed:

"There's spontaneity!"

Mr. Fish was evidently a humorist. He was a jolly little man with a red face. He told several funny stories, and recited two poems in negro dialect. The first, entitled "Po' Ole Jim," was pathetic; and the second, "When the Persimmon's Ripe," was of lighter character, and began:

*Ole marster's feelin' mighty good,  
Got the autumn in he blood,*

*Standin' straight an' walkin' roun'  
Laik he's foot don' tech de groun':  
Laik de air he drinkin' in  
Fotch his boyhood back agin;*

*An' I know he been to see  
Dat air ole persimmon tree  
Whar de sweet persimmons grow  
As dey used ter, long ago.  
Oh, dese ole eyes full of tears,  
Thinkin' of dose blessed years!*

Then followed a pathetic reference to the fact that the two boys, white and black, used to forget the color line while gathering persimmons; and that the sight of the ripe fruit on the tree brought back a fitting feeling of youth to the master, manifested chiefly by the familiar tone in which he cried, "Mose, dem persimmons gittin' ripe!"

This would have been a somewhat original poem had not the author landed master and man, prophetically, in Heaven, with the reflection that persimmons will be ripe all the year round there, and the color line forgotten forever. The member upon the front seat blew her nose, and ejaculated, "There's pathos; there's delicacy!" and there was a great buzzing of admiration all over the house.

Mr. Fish was the hit of the evening, and he re-

sponded so willingly to repeated requests to keep the platform that the other lions became uneasy and began to growl under their breaths. The Madam President gave a deep sigh as she rose to her feet, as though she were inhaling the volatilized soul with which she felt the room to be pervaded.

"I am glad to-night," she cried, "that I live in this city! Not in New York, Paris, or London, but right here!" This sentiment was greeted with a storm of applause.

"What other city of the world can boast of a Clancy, a Fish, a Winston, a Hudson, a Feehan? In what other club of the world except the Garden City is it possible to get all this array of genius together? I am sometimes laughed at when I say that we have fourteen poets as members of this club. Let people come and see for themselves. We can produce them. And, now, ladies and gentlemen, we are sorry that Mr. Fish has finished, but we shall be glad to have Mr. Winston begin. He is the local James Whitcomb Riley, though his name is known better across the water than here," and she gave a wide sweep with her arm, inclusive of that indefinite region where so many reputations are most flourishing, "across the water."

The poet Winston, whose fame grazed at the end of so long a tether, was a large, ungainly man.



well into the sixties. His hair and beard were black, his eyebrows hoary and shaggy. He had a way of lowering his head and of looking upward, as if he were peering at the tips of his eyebrows while he talked. It took him several minutes to extricate his glasses and his manuscript from the depths of his pocket.

His principal contribution related to an arch that had been erected in a Southern city to a hero of the Spanish-American war. Mr. Winston explained at great length how he had received the inspiration for this poem. During a recent journey he had seen this arch and been struck with its beauty and the sentiment which had prompted its erection. Then he drifted off into a long homily on the beauties of patriotism, and an incidental panegyric of the flag, and a statement of his willingness to lay down his life for the same, old as he was. The lady member in front ejaculated, "There's nobility!" and an aged and red-faced doctor in the midst of the audience began to snore loudly.

"Suddenly the thought occurred to me," cried Mr. Winston, "that there were seven soldiers with this officer. Why were not their names also on the arch? I became inspired. I sat down on a bench in front of a little hotel and dashed off the lines which I am about to read you to-night."

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And he began. The ballad was long, for it contained a minute description of the monument, and an account of the glorious deed which it commemorated.

*And I gazed at that arch which lifted high  
The name of one man to heaven,  
And I said, "It is well, but where, oh where,  
Are the names of the other seven?"*

Mr. Winston concluded with a description of another arch in heaven, which should have room also for the names of the other seven.

"Mr. Winston is one of our fourteen poets," explained the Madam President. "We have thirteen more just like him. Like him, that is, in genius, but differing from him in style. Mrs. Ella Hudson, our great mystical poet, will now read us one of her effusions. Mrs. Hudson, who, I am happy and proud to say, is a member of this club, has been called by some the Sappho, by others the Mrs. Browning, by others the Ella Wheeler Wilcox, of our city. I compare her to Mrs. Browning, while she herself thinks her work resembles more that of Mr. Browning. Mrs. Hudson."

The lady's effusion was long, gruesome, and partly unconscious of meter. It described a night

spent by a woman beside the corpse of the man she loved. Many of the stanzas were devoted to speculations as to whether or not the spirit was in the room. "And if not," sighed the poetess, "if he be in regions far and fair, can he see my sorrow there?"

The concluding seven or eight stanzas discussed the probability of catching the spirit if it were flitting from star to star. The poem concluded with the line—

*Will I meet him, anywhere?*

The "him" and the "where" were both uttered with the raising reflection, and the poetess stood for some seconds after the last word, with faded blue eyes fixed upon the northeast corner of the room, above the heads of the audience. One unpoetic soul turned and gazed over her shoulder in the same direction as though she expected to see a cobweb there.

Mrs. Hudson wore a white lace cap tied under her chin, making her resemble some old print of Queen Clotilda. The effect of her reading was somewhat marred by the prodigious snoring of the red-faced doctor, whom an indignant member poked in the ribs from time to time, causing him to break off

with startled snorts. Once he grumbled, "Leave me alone, Mary; I'm not asleep." Mary was the name of his wife, who was not present.

"And now," said the Madam President, "I'll not say that we have saved the dessert for the last, for in this feast all has been dessert."

"Isn't she perfectly lovely?" said one member to another in a stage whisper.

"There's tact!" ejaculated the lady in the front row.

"But you all know what to expect," continued the Madam President, "when I tell you that we shall now have the honor and pleasure of listening to our great magazine poet, Mr. James Bruce Feehan."

Mr. Feehan was the only member of the poetic vaudeville who had anything resembling access to the Eastern magazines. He was a tall, thin man, who parted his whiskers in the middle. He had a large, thin, transparent nose; and the chief study of his life was to appear esthetic—a yearning, however, which was not sufficiently strong to make him give up chewing tobacco. He wrote vast quantities of mechanically perfect poemettes; and he was fond of having himself photographed in soulful attitudes, with his chin upon his hand, with his right finger-tip touching his forehead, gazing at a rose in his right hand, and so forth. He read

six or eight brief twitterings upon the subject of love, and then, after bowing sadly and majestically to the Madam President, left the room.

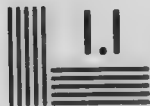
The Madam President announced the date of the next meeting, adding:

"I can promise, almost with certainty, a rare intellectual treat for our next session. The famous rising lawyer and orator, Mr. Edward Crissey, has as good as promised to lecture to us. If necessary, we shall send a committee to bring him by force. The subject, as soon as he selects one, will be announced in the papers. It will be something interesting and improving to the mind. The meeting is now adjourned."



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## CHAPTER XIV

### ABOUT MEN AND HORSES

During the progress of the evening, Nellie tittered several times, once so loudly that frowning faces were turned in her direction. It required a powerful counter-attraction to make her so far forget herself while poets were reciting. Such attraction existed in the attention and wit of the celebrated esthete and artist, Mr. Gifford Dare, who had managed to crowd into a seat behind the fair secretary, and was whispering a series of amusing comments into her ear.

Mr. Dare was advanced in years—he was about fifty—yet he had the knack of appearing at most times to be in the neighborhood of thirty. Occasionally, when one met him, he seemed aged, through fatigue, perhaps, or some fault of costume; yet the next time that one saw him rejuvenescence was sure to have taken place. He grew old as the frog climbs the well in the troublesome mathematical problem—he was continually slipping back and then



climbing up again. Commercially successful as an artist, he maintained luxurious rooms in the Fine Arts Building, where his walls were hung with original studies, and his antique furniture covered with oriental rugs. A pair of Kiskilm curtains were looped gracefully back in the door of an alcove, within which were a Turkish table and a broad, low divan. A manikin and a suit of medieval armor added to the picturesqueness of the main apartment, which was rendered more interesting by a series of costumes of all nations hanging from hooks on the wall. Nellie had been there once, in company with several other ladies, to view a new painting, and she had come away much impressed.

Mr. Dare was a picturesque and effective dresser. He studied the effect of various costumes before his mirror for hours. He delighted chiefly in capes and slouch hats, yet he was always exactly correct upon every occasion. When the golf season was on he might be seen even in his studio, attired in full golf regalia, and he sometimes wore the high, glazed boots and velvet trousers of the riding habit; though, as a matter of fact, he abhorred golf itself and would no more have mounted a horse than a rhinoceros.

Mr. Dare was a great authority on the number of buttons that should be worn on bicycle trousers just above the stocking; he knew the correct length

of a string tie to a fraction of an inch; and the swell young men about town watched the shade of his walking gloves solicitously. He possessed the supreme secret of wearing lively colors and startling combinations without shocking the canons of good taste.

As for personal appearance, the artist was of slight, elegant figure, while for the rest, he was languid, amusingly ironical, and given to saying things that would cause people to quote him. As every man has a secret ambition which is a greater passion than his life's work, so Mr. Dare longed to be known for his apt and nimble wit.

"I am going to 'save myself,' as the French say, as soon as this thing is over," he whispered to Nellie, skilfully seating himself so that she could reply without twisting her neck too much.

"Oh, Mr. Dare, and we have such interesting discussions after the adjournment!"

"You won't to-night," he rattled. "Unsuccessful poets are bad company."

"But these are not unsuccessful."

"Oh, yes they are—all except Feehan, and he's not a poet. You can tell that they are unsuccessful from the fact that they are all jealous of him because the magazines take his stuff. There's no

such thing as jealousy among geniuses. Where did you find all these freaks, anyway?"

"Sh— If the Madam President hears you, she'll never let you come here again."

"Heaven forbid! For then I should lose my one opportunity of seeing you."

Nellie flushed and looked about her anxiously.

"Then one is always in mortal terror at an author's reception, anyway. He suffers from haunting fear that one of them may have written something that he hasn't read."

"You should be more—more patriotic," replied Nellie, feeling for the right word and missing it. "You should read the works of the famous men of your own city."

She was flattered that this great artist was whispering to her and felt a certain pleasing excitement at the adventure.

"There are so many famous authors in the women's clubs," sighed the artist, "that one would need the memory of the recording angel to keep track of them. I can't even remember the names of this batch to-night—and it's considered impolite, when talking with a famous author, to get his name wrong."

"You must stay and get acquainted with our poets," said Nellie. "They won't eat you."

"No poets for me, thank you. One of them might present me with a book."

"Well—what would there be so very terrible about that?"

"They always come nosing around the next day to see if you have cut the leaves. I always forget that necessary ceremony, and the visit of inspection makes me nervous. A law should be passed prohibiting the publishing of books of verse with uncut leaves."

When Mrs. Hudson took the floor, Mr. Dare was in great feather. With a cynic's logic, he felt that he could ingratiate himself in one woman's favor by ridiculing another, especially when that other possessed a gift of which her sister might be envious.

He leaned forward and languidly pulled the tip of his drooping mustache.

"There's soul for you," he whispered, "as our dear sister on the mourner's bench would say."

Nellie suddenly remembered a remark that she had once heard some one make concerning a thin, soulful person. It did not come to her as a recollection; it simply floated into her consciousness through the power of association.

"Yes, she's all soul and bones," she tittered.

The artist started.

"By Jove, she's not stupid, either!" he thought. "Now that's downright cruel!" he whispered, approvingly.

"Woman's inhumanity to woman," retorted Nellie. "Do you know," she continued, turning farther around that she might better face this brilliant man, "that Mrs. Hudson is thinner than when I last saw her, and then I thought that she had reached the limit?"

"She must have dropped a bone," suggested Dare.

It was then that the secretary tittered so loudly that the frowning faces were turned toward her. It was during this conversation that Mr. Dare obtained permission to call.

The Madam President's announcement that the meeting had adjourned acted as though she had lifted the gate of a dam, and a flood of suppressed talk and enthusiasm burst forth. The poets were immediately surrounded, and were questioned as to their manner of writing, as to how they felt when inspired, as to how they knew when they were actually inspired, and so forth. One lady asked Mr. Clancy if there was any way to detect the difference between real inspiration and pseudo-inspiration, a question for which the Madam President reproved her with the remark that our poets could not know, as they never felt any but the genuine kind.

A nervous, sallow lady, with a square face and thin, gray hair, forced her way through the crowd with desperate eagerness.

"Can you tell me—" she asked, addressing first one poet and then another, but each time her question was cut in the middle by an outburst of volubility on the part of her sisters. At least twenty times she cried shrilly, "Can you tell me—" her voice darting into the brief silences with the swiftness of a swallow flitting into an open door.

"I did so want to find out," she explained to a friend, as they were going down in the elevator together, "whether poetry is the true soul expression or not. We must be striving continually toward the higher life, toward soul expansion. We must give our souls voices! Oh, I wish we could have had a discussion on this point! Wouldn't it be lovely," she gushed, "if one could look into the mind of a poet and see all the beautiful thoughts, the delightful fancies there!"

"There are some thoughts too beautiful for the world to have," sighed the friend, a female lawyer, with short hair, and a respectable practice in the probate court.

As the throng began to disperse, Mr. Dare went for his cloak and hat, and then hastened back to the assembly room with the purpose of riding down

to the street with Nellie, and an indefinite thought as to future developments. Perhaps he would even offer to escort her to her home on the North Side, though a feeling of fatigue penetrated his youthful veneer as he thought of the long journey back on the street cars. He glanced at himself in a full-length mirror in the hall, and exulted in the romantic figure which he presented in his long artist's cloak. At any rate he would show himself to this fair creature in this becoming attire. What was his disgust to meet her just coming out on the right arm of Mr. Murchison, the plump, blond, and effusive Mrs. Kimball-Smith on his left.

"You both live on the North Side," the Magnate was saying in his most caressing voice, "and right in my neighborhood, so there is no earthly reason why I should not give myself the pleasure of your society."

"Oh, I'm so afraid we shall be putting you out!" simpered Mrs. Kimball-Smith.

"On the contrary, you have saved the situation, so far as I am concerned. I was so afraid I should be compelled to ride home alone."

Mr. Dare followed them down. What was his disgust to behold an elegant victoria waiting. As Mr. Murchison approached, the footman leaped down from his box, and the beautiful iron-gray

steeds shook their silver-mounted harness till it gave forth a silvery jingling. The footman threw open the carriage, and the Magnate helped in the two women. Then he stepped in and sat beside Nellie upon the back seat. The electric light fell in a sickly glare upon his high forehead, his gray mustache, his square chin. He licked his fishy lips as he looked at Nellie and said with a familiar smile:

"It's a glorious evening. We shall have a delightful drive through the park."

"Such a fitting conclusion to an evening with the poets!" cried Mrs. Kimball-Smith.

The beautiful steeds pranced briskly away over the slippery cobblestones with much clattering of hoofs. Nellie sat up very straight and rigid, as one unaccustomed to ride in carriages, while Murchison lolled back familiarly in a corner. Dare stood looking after them until they disappeared in the direction of the bridge.

"Damned old libertine!" he muttered under his breath. "When a man gets to be gray as a rat, it's about time he began to behave himself." The artist was not gray; his hair and mustache were dyed.

But Dare was an artist after all, whose religion was love for the beautiful. His perception was not always the most penetrating, and the eyes of his soul were blurred by a fleshy film, causing him often



to miss the more ethereal and immortal revelations of his god; yet a moonrise could make him think of his mother and his childhood, and a really beautiful woman was his only serious temptation to folly. Perfection of outline, shapeliness, the warm, swelling curves of the living statue, carved by the hands of the Master Sculptor,—these things were a sufficient joy to him. He could have loved, in his way, an idiot woman with the features and form of a *Psyche*.

He forgot Nellie for the moment now, as he stood looking up at the ancient moon sailing far above among her stars. There is something primeval, lonely, remote, unfamiliar about the moon, even when seen from a city street. One feels as though suddenly transported to the heart of a vast desert, to a mountain top, or to the desolate shore of the boundless sea. If a cab roll by with its mysterious freight, or the feet of a belated wanderer beat upon the pave, the feeling of strangeness, isolation and littleness is only accentuated. The vast, grim piles shrank to nothingness as the artist gazed, and the clouds of black smoke pouring from a thousand chimneys, dwindled to the breath from the nostrils of a sleeping beast.

Mr. Dare shivered, lit a cigarette, and turned his footsteps toward Rector's. When he ceased to look

at the moon, he thought again of the woman with the red-gold hair.

Meanwhile Nellie, Mrs. Kimball-Smith, and the Magnate were rolling northward on Dearborn Avenue. The harness jingled merrily, the hoofs of the splendid team thudded dully on the asphalt pave, and the soft rubber tires rolled noiselessly.

"It's a fine night," observed the Magnate.

"Isn't it perfectly lovely?" cried Mrs. Kimball-Smith. "It's exactly full moon now."

Mr. Murchison looked critically at the moon.

"No," he replied, "to-morrow night it will be full. I can see a little circular snip off from the left side. What do you think, Mrs. Chapin?"

"It's almost full," assented Nellie.

"That's the effects of being out late," observed the financier, who had not an original mind.

Mrs. Kimball-Smith laughed merrily. "Mr. Murchison is so droll," she exclaimed. The widow was of a pretty, cuddling sort, and the white opera shawl which she had thrown over her head was exceedingly becoming—as she very well knew.

"Hold 'em down a little, Tom," said Mr. Murchison to the driver. "That off mare," he observed to the ladies, "is a nervous beast. She's been on the race track, and she has a habit of starting every time she hears a team coming up behind her. That's the

trouble with putting a carriage horse on the race track, especially if it's high-strung. This one has trotted in two twenty-two. I had to have her, because she just matches Lucy there. Her owner, Bob McCormick—do you know Bob, Mrs. Chapin?" Nellie did not. From time to time Mr. Murchison would mention one or another of the city's millionaires, with the ingenuous question, "Do you know him?" And both ladies would reply, "Not er—personally. I have heard of him."

The ex-model felt as though she were dreaming.

"Bob didn't want to sell her, but I had to have her. The beggar had the nerve to ask me two thousand dollars for her. Just a hold-up. He knew she wasn't worth it, and so did I—and he didn't need the money, either. Lucy, there, isn't fast. She can go in three minutes in a light run-about. She—"

"See what a distinct shadow that tree throws on the pavement!" cried the widow. She had been riding with owners of horses frequently, and in her greater experience knew that they would talk of nothing but their animals unless headed off in the most adroit and determined manner. That the Magnate was a horse man she knew from the fact that he saluted the one or two men whom they passed under the lights, driving teams. There is a

sort of masonry existing among the owners of good horses in a great city.

"Yes, that's the electric light," observed Murchison. "Do you like electricity for illuminating purposes, Mrs. Chapin?"

"We use gas," replied Nellie. "Electricity is not good for the complexion, they say. Then, too, it's fatal to us ladies who are getting old. It brings out the slightest wrinkle."

"I should think you'd have it put in then, to show that you haven't any."

"I just knew Mrs. Chapin was fishing for a compliment," laughed the widow, who had a wrinkle or two in the corners of her eyes.

"Our friend, Mr. Crissey," said Nellie, racking her brain to think of some prosperous acquaintance who must be in the Magnate's set, "will not use electricity to study by. He is having gas put into his new house, as he told my husband and myself when we were dining there the other evening. He thinks electricity ruins the eyes."

"Are you intimate with the Crisseys?" asked Murchison.

"Oh, very. My husband and he were school-boys together."

"Shall you come and hear Mr. Crissey's talk before the club?" asked the widow. "It's sure to be

something grand. He's a bright, brainy man—a rising man."

"And so handsome!" cried Nellie.

"There! now the cat's out of the bag," said the Magnate. "You ladies are all alike. Let a man be handsome, and he's bright, brainy, and everything else, in your eyes."

"But you're coming to hear him, aren't you?" persisted the widow, making sweet eyes at Murchison.

"Will you be there?" he asked earnestly, leaning close to Nellie.

"Of course. I have to be there. I am one of the officers of the club," she added proudly.

"Then you may count on me, though I'll not promise to listen to Crissey. He doesn't interest me particularly. He has no standing among successful men—men of real brain."

Mrs. Kimball-Smith bit her lip with vexation. She thought Murchison's spite against Crissey due to a spasm of jealousy.

"Now we're in the park," she cried, with added animation to cover her annoyance. "You should have brought Mrs. Hudson along to point out the poetic beauties to us."

"Don't you think she has soul?" asked Nellie.

"Yes," replied the Magnate, "certainly. All hu-

man beings have souls. I believe that horses have souls. There's that off mare of mine now—"

"But Mrs. Hudson is so painfully thin!" exclaimed the widow, guarding in tierce, and thinking at the same time of her own billowy figure.

"All soul and bones!" added Nellie, with her explosive titter.

The Magnate leaned back in his carriage and laughed heartily, spontaneously.

"All soul and bones!" he repeated. "That's neatly put! That expresses it exactly! You couldn't describe her better if you were to talk an hour." Nellie was delighted at the success of her *bon-mot*.

"I'm glad that you did not bring her along," she continued, "because poets are bad company. They are always offering to present you with their books, and then they call around the next day and pick them up to see if you have cut the leaves or not."

"And of course you've always forgotten to do it," laughed the Magnate.

"Oh, of course!"

Poor Mrs. Kimball-Smith was in despair at this outburst of brilliancy on Nellie's part. "Mrs. Hudson seemed thinner to-night than when I last saw her," she observed, anxious to say something of interest.

"She must have dropped a bone," tittered Nellie,

secretly grateful for the unexpected opening. Murchison chuckled with glee, and the widow regretted that she had not bitten out her tongue before making the fruitful remark.

She ached to get in a dig at Nellie, and two or three sly, poisonous things entered her brain, but she was afraid of this bright woman who was in such form to-night.

They were well into the park now. It was mid-October, one of those glorious nights of fall that compensate for all the villainies of the climate. The air had that warming and at the same time biting tang that one tastes in dry wine. It is a trite figure, but none other is so good; for the air exhilarated without intoxicating, as the best wine should do. There was in it, moreover, a lingering regret, a memory and a sigh of departed summer, as wine from a far country will evoke dreams of the castled Rhine, visions of sunny Spain, or the faint laughter of brown-skinned, ragged children among the hills of Sicily.

The ghost of summer seemed to be wandering in the dim moonlight, among the trees of the park, grieving over her dead flowers. The moon shone whitely on the mottled trunks of the birches, and the tall trees were silhouetted cleanly upon the grass as though worked in black on some ancient tapes-

try. The white electric lights gleamed numerously, making little spheres of incongruous noonday among sylvan foliage. But for their garishness one could have thought them Japanese lanterns hanging in a festal garden whose revelers had fled.

"Drive down by the Lake, Tom," commanded the Magnate. "I want to get on to the race track there, so that you can speed 'em up a bit. They step well together," he explained to the ladies. "The off mare is a little too fast for the other, but they have learned each other's gait. Tom, here, is the best driver I've ever had. He can get four minutes out of them, with us all in the carriage. Before I bought Lucy of Bob McCormick—do you know Bob? Oh, that's so, you said you didn't. Before I bought Lucy—"

"We shall see the moonlight on the Lake!" cried the widow. "I just dote on moonlight when it falls on water, like the ocean or the lake."

"Yes," assented Murchison. "You can see more of it than when it falls on the land."

He was right, for miles of the restless water were glorified by a long trail of melted silver. Had Mr. Roth, Murchison's poor employee, been present, he would have shut his eyes, and would have imagined himself sailing away toward the moon on that trail in a tiny shallop, with a plump little pock-marked



woman by his side. But she would not have been pock-marked to him; her face would have been radiant with the beauty of a Greek nymph, and he would have stepped ashore on the moon with her, hand in hand. And the light on their faces and in their eyes—

"Here's the race-track, Tom!" said the Magnate. "Now see what you can do with 'em. Lucy there is too fat," he apologized to the ladies. A moment later Nellie was holding her breath in fear, and the divine panorama of the night was whizzing by her at the thoughtless rate of a mile in four minutes.

"Tom," said Mr. Murchison, as soon as they had slowed down, "don't that new mare forge a little?"

"I thought I heard her myself, sir," replied the coachman, looking back.

"If you think there's any danger of her quartering, you'd better put her in boots—though I hate 'em."

"Very well, sir," replied Tom.

The Magnate descended at Nellie's house, helped her out, and escorted her to the door.

"I hope to see you often," he said in his caressing voice, holding her hand. "We are near neighbors, you know. Any time that you want to take a ride, you have only to let me know. By the way"—here he resorted to the cheap expedient of the rich Lotha-

rio—"your husband is welcome to use one of my saddle horses whenever he feels like it. They need exercise, and there's nothing so healthy for a man of sedentary habits as riding."

When Nellie entered her flat she found a full light burning, and Harry asleep under it, with the sporting extra of a sensational paper on his lap. He had been growing bald rapidly within the last few months, and the tuft of thin hair standing on his shiny forehead looked comical to her. He was tired, and his mouth had dropped open. She shook him, and he awoke with a start.

"Our gas bill was five dollars last month," she said. "Why don't you turn it off when you are going to sleep?"

"Don't come home with a grouch on, Nell," he pleaded. "It's bad enough to leave a fellow alone all evening, without picking him up for something the minute you set foot in the door."

## CHAPTER XV

### THE CORRECT MAN

Some time before this, the great firm of corporation lawyers, Wilson and Moore, called in Edward Crissey to help them in a damage suit brought by the city against one of the many railroads which center in it like spokes in the hub of a mighty wheel. They needed the most convincing pleader they could find to talk before a jury, and perhaps before the Supreme Bench. They were agreeably surprised to learn that Edward Crissey not only could state an argument in a dignified, clear and most convincing manner, but that he was a sound lawyer and invaluable in consultation. Wilson, the senior member of the firm, took a great liking to him personally, and told his wife, who was a society leader—by some considered the leader—that he thought "Crissey would do."

"Almost any man will do," replied Mrs. Wilson, a mite of a woman, who managed to be a "queen of society" and mother a big girl and two or three

boys successfully at the same time; "almost any man will do in American society who doesn't eat with his knife and wear a soft shirt at an evening reception. But what about his wife? We can excuse eccentricities of attire in a talented man, but not even genius makes them acceptable in a woman. These self-made men are apt to have very rudimentary wives. Besides, it's safer to invite a doubtful man than his wife. The man will be so busy continuing the making process that one is not likely to see much more of him; but the woman, if given the least encouragement, is sure to hatch out a society bee and become a source of embarrassment."

Mr. Wilson was a short, stoutish man, with keen gray eyes, light hair, and a light red mustache. He was near-sighted and wore a gold *pince-nez*. He was very deaf, and, as is often the case, his voice was as low and soft as a woman's. He belonged to several fashionable clubs, and was retained at princely salaries by half a dozen great corporations. The Wilsons lived in a simple, squarely-built palace on State Street, with a big packing case of a ball room, an architectural afterthought, out behind.

Mr. Wilson laughed. "Very well, my dear; if you make so much of it, we won't ask him. To tell you the truth, I hadn't thought of the wife. I have never seen her, and I don't suppose anybody else

ever has. Crissey's a good fellow, though, of sterling merit, and is going to be heard from some day. He's a rising man. I'll invite him to the Union League to lunch and let it go at that."

"No," replied Mrs. Wilson, who, alone of mortals, could make the lawyer hear without shouting at him. "You have excited my curiosity. He must indeed be a prodigy, you are so seldom enthusiastic over anybody. I'll tell you what I'll do. I'll invite the Crisseys to Ethel's coming out, and I can tell with one glance whether the wife will do or not. It will be a grand crush, and they will scarcely be noticed. I have never called on the woman, but she probably doesn't know the difference."

Mr. Wilson kissed his little wife as a sign that he understood the magnitude of her sacrifice. To tell the truth, he was quite anxious to make friends with Crissey, in whose abilities he had great confidence, and whom he believed to be a man worth cultivating. One of his duties as attorney for large corporations was to "get on his staff" men of influence, either present or prospective.

Dorothy Crissey was somewhat mystified several days later by the receipt of a letter in a large square envelope, informing her and her husband that Mr. and Mrs. Wilson would be pleased to see them at the presentation of their daughter Ethel to

the social world. Dorothy knew, of course, that her husband had been associated with Wilson and Moore in an important case, but this fact did not greatly impress her, as she took for granted that her husband was the most learned and eloquent lawyer in the country. Had he been called into hurried consultation by the secretary of state or the president, she would simply have wondered why they had not asked his advice before. That Mrs. Wilson should invite her to her house seemed a more portentous matter. It was the first time that the rays of her husband's rising greatness had caused her to shine with reflected light.

"I have nothing to wear," she objected, taking immediate refuge in woman's immemorial excuse—the excuse that originated with Eve.

"Nothing to wear!" exclaimed Edward. "There's—there's your black silk."

"That's nice, I know, but it wouldn't be suitable for such an occasion."

"Well, there's that brand new dress you bought the other day to go to church in."

"Oh, that's only a cloth street dress. Besides, I haven't any wrap that would do. Why, Edward, this is the most fashionable house in town. I wouldn't go there for the world and have you ashamed of me. I—"

"Ashamed of you? Ashamed of my wife? What nonsense!"

"Besides, they only want you, any way."

"Why, the invitation says for both of us."

"I know it does; but neither of them ever saw me, and Mr. Wilson is acquainted with you. No; you go, and come back and tell me all about it. I'll go next time."

And there she stuck. Had it been a question of advancing her husband's interests in any way, she would have gone through fire. But she honestly believed that her husband was the man on whom they wanted, and she did not wish to cause him the expense of a new gown for a single occasion. She insisted, however, on his going; and she helped him to dress with great solicitude when the afternoon arrived.

"You must wear a tail-coat, Edward," she said. "Your black diagonal cutaway and your silk hat will be just the thing. And you must wear your gloves, also. These black gloves will do. Black gloves are always dressy, and, besides, they just match your coat."

To prevent his looking too funereal, she brought out a new pair of trousers, with fine white and black stripes, which he had recently ordered at a fashionable tailor's, and which fitted him so per-

fectly that they were the pride of her heart. The reflection that the occasion was a festive one induced her to produce one of the white string ties which she had bought for him to wear with his dress suit.

"Pin it down in the back, Dolly," said he, as she was tying it on; "there's nothing in the world like one of these starched white ties to climb up to the top of a man's collar. And the bow slips around under your ear, too, if the thing isn't fairly spiked down."

Dorothy drove the pin through the stiff collar with the end of her thumb, and then spent some time pulling at her husband's tie, picking bits of lint from his coat, and giving him a poke here and there. She followed him to the door, calling: "Be sure to stop somewhere and get your boots blacked, dear; and don't forget to put on your gloves before you go into the house."

"Don't beget it, papa," echoed little Dorothy, now four years of age.

"Your papa'll be the handsomest man there," cried the proud wife, catching her baby to her breast, and hugging her because she was half Edward's, "and the smartest, too."

A few moments later Jim came in.

"I met the governor in his glad rags," said he.



"Whew, wasn't he swell! Looked like an undertaker."

"James," said Mrs. Crissey, "you will oblige me by not speaking so flippantly of your father. A boy who has such a father should be proud of him every moment of his life and should never speak of him disrespectfully."

There was a grave, quiet look in the gray eyes, and a something in the voice, lower and more distinct than usual, which Jim understood.

"I didn't mean no disrespect, mother," he replied apologetically. "I only meant he was all dressed up."

"But there is disrespect in comparing your father with a man of any occupation inferior to his own. Your father couldn't look like an undertaker. To my mind," she continued more softly, "he looked more like a senator or—or—or something of that sort. Always remember you are your father's son, James."

"Geel!" grumbled the boy as he left the room, "mother's touchy about father. She bristles up like a cat if you don't speak about him just so. An' I bet I can lick 'im myself when I get two years older." Crooking his right arm, he felt of his muscle.

Faithful to his wife's advice, Mr. Crissey had his

boots blacked by a negro who presided over a chair on the sidewalk; and he pulled on his black gloves just before entering the Wilson residence. He rang the bell, and the butler said to him:

"Right-hand room, sir, at the top of the stairs."

There were numerous carriages in the street before the door, and he met several very young men whom he did not know coming down the wide stairs. He noticed, with one shrewd glance, that they were dressed so exactly alike that they seemed to be in uniform, and that they all had a groomed and ironed air about them as though each suit had come directly from the hands of the same fashionable tailor.

The door opened again before he reached the top landing, and the men who came in spoke familiarly to the butler. As he glanced down at the drawing-room over the balustrade, he saw that it was packed with women. A faint smell of roses floated up to his nostrils. A neat maid wearing a cap pointed to the door of a room, and he entered. A young man stood before a mirror arranging his hair, and two others, smoking cigarettes, were standing near a window, talking in a low tone. These were dressed exactly like the others whom he had met on the stairs. All were clean-shaven, and he noticed that the faces of three out of the five were

fat and florid. He did not know any of the men in the room.

Laying his coat and cane on the bed and setting his hat atop, he descended. Standing on tiptoe, he looked over the garden of heads, but recognized no one. Feeling conspicuous there in the hall, he plunged into the throng, and was, after a few moments, carried into the middle of the room much as a body frozen in a glacier is moved onward. He received a mixed impression of women, rich toilets, delicate perfumes, snatches of conversation concerning past and prospective social events, and roses—oceans of flowers. Then he slowly and gently but firmly wedged his way out again.

Standing on tiptoe once more, he looked about for Wilson, but could see him nowhere. Then he observed that there was a sort of Gulf Stream in this sea of people which was steadily flowing toward a woman and a girl standing together at one end of the great drawing-room.

The people passed in single file before this couple; they shook hands with the elder woman first, were introduced to the younger, spoke a few words, and passed on. He understood, and floated into the edge of the Gulf Stream. After about ten minutes he arrived and found himself before a richly dressed woman of diminutive stature, who reminded him

of a picture he had seen in some history of Marie Louise. She was in fact attired in an empire gown, a fashion which she much affected. Two or three women pressed against him from behind, and he fancied he felt sharp knuckles thrust against his back. The miniature Marie Louise looked up at him sweetly and politely expectant.

"I am Mr. Crissey, Edward Crissey," he explained.

"We are delighted to see you here, Mr. Crissey. I have heard my husband say so many nice things about you. You and he seem to have become great friends," and she extended a little hand.

Mr. Crissey raised his hand and gave one tug at a finger of his glove. Then he remembered his wife's parting injunction to keep his gloves on, and he seized the little hand and gave it an honest shake.

"Your husband, Madam, is a man whose abilities and character I greatly admire. I am delighted to learn from your lips that the sentiment is—ah—somewhat mutual."

"Oh, it is, I assure you. Is M<sup>rs</sup>. Crissey with you?"

"No, Madam, I regret to say that she is not. The fact is—"

"Oh, what a disappointment! I did so want her to see the floral decorations. Mr. Crissey, this is

my daughter, Ethel. Ethel, this is the eloquent gentleman of whom you have heard your father speak so often."

Crissey also shook hands with the daughter, a tall young woman in an elaborate gown, whose pretty cheeks were flushed with excitement.

"I congratulate you, Miss Wilson, on this auspicious occasion," he began.

His voice trembled a trifle, because he was a true orator, and his periods always bred emotion. Miss Wilson, though instantly alive to the fact that something *gauche* was happening, yet felt strangely swayed by the sympathetic and earnest *timbre* in the man's voice. The dark eyes looked seriously and gravely into hers, and the florid face with its crown of white hair was distinguished, if not exactly handsome. Edward Crissey was never ridiculous, not even when swimming in strange waters.

"May these flowers," he continued, "which I see here in such lavish profusion—" but the current of the Gulf Stream was too strong for him.

He was swept onward and the remainder of his pretty speech was addressed to a broad feminine back and a topknot of white feminine hair.

"Be typical of the roses of love and happiness that will strew the path of your whole life."

Mr. Crissey floated to the wall, then along that boundary and out into another large room that was less crowded. Here he observed a sideboard, loaded with good things and guarded by several tall sentinels in evening dress. Groups of guests were chatting here, and occasionally some of the young men would look anxiously at the viands and decanters, but nobody made a move to partake of anything. Crissey did not dream of taking a sandwich or of asking one of the sublime sentinels for a drink. He did not know that in "high" society in the formative state, "high" society that has almost arrived, people are not yet at perfect ease. There is still that lingering and ever-present dread of doing something not correct, something that would not be done, for instance, in a swell London drawing-room. Nobody dares to take the initiative. Men and women do not feel quite at home in each other's houses, no matter how magnificent, when those houses are brand new. Correct costumes, correct invitation cards, correct hours for dining and giving functions, are the first steps up a ladder that it takes centuries to climb. Even servants can be imported. Ease, assurance, elegant bonhomie, can be neither bought nor brought from over seas. They are the finishing touches to "society."

Nobody spoke to Crissey in this room, but he saw

something at a distance that looked friendly. His eyes wandered to the library, where were long rows of large volumes, whose elegant bindings shone behind glass doors. He approached, and soon felt as though all his old friends had grown suddenly rich, tricked themselves out in purple and fine linen and turned their backs on him. What struck him most forcibly was the numerical size of the editions. Authors who were familiar to him in one volume, or at the most in three or four, were here swollen into twelve, fifteen or twenty portentous tomes.

"So does wealth make some human beings swell," reflected Crissey, "without adding anything to their intrinsic worth."

He stood for some time looking up at the shelves, his hands, still covered with the black gloves, thrust into his trousers' pockets. Then he went upstairs, took his tall hat, cane, and stick, and left the house. The butler opened the front door for him and bowed solemnly as he passed out. He had gone up the street about a block, wrestling into his overcoat as he walked, when he was hailed by Wilson, just coming home in a hired cab.

"Hello!" cried that successful man; "been up to my house?"

"I am just coming from there," replied Crissey. "I have paid my respects to your charming daugh-

ter and no less charming wife and am now on my way home."

"Did they treat you all right up there?"

"Beautifully. There was such a crowd, of course, that I had but a moment to speak to your wife and daughter. I congratulate you on your beautiful home and—and—charming family." He remembered that he had used the word charming but a moment before, but could think of no synonym.

"I'm sorry you didn't wait for me," said Wilson cordially. "Detained by important business. Won't you come back now?"

"No, no, thank you. I am preparing a brief, and I'm behind with it now. I must burn midnight oil to-night. By the way, I did not have the time to express as I should have liked my congratulations to your wife and my good wishes to your daughter. Will you convey to them my sentiments in fitting words?"

Mr. Wilson assured Crissey on this point, and the latter again went on his way. But just as he was boarding a West Side car he remembered that he had left some important papers at his office, and he went there in search of them. A letter was sticking in the slot of his roll-top desk. He opened it mechanically, but an exultant flush spread over his



checks before he had read it half through. It was an offer from a great railroad company to retain him as permanent counsel at a salary of ten thousand dollars a year. This would not interfere with his general practice, and he was to be paid his usual fees when actually engaged upon cases for the company.

"I don't see why I can not accept this," he reflected.

He went home in a cab, and arrived in time for supper. His wife met him at the door and helped him off with his coat.

"You look fine, Edward!" she said, tightening the knot of his white tie, which had slipped loose. "There are some men who were just made to wear good clothes and you are one of them. If I had my way, you'd go down to the office every day just like this."

"There, there!" he replied, patting her cheek. "don't try to make a dude of me. By the way, I didn't seem to be exactly in style to-day, after all."

"Not in style, Edward? I can't see how anybody could be dressed any better than you are at the present moment."

"Nevertheless, all the men seemed to be wearing prince-alberts. It may have been a fancy of mine, but I thought they were all dressed alike, and I

was different. I felt, too, as though Mrs. Wilson cast a queer glance at me out of the corner of her eye. Not that it makes the least difference in the world—and anyway, it was probably imagination. What have you for supper? This cool weather makes me as hungry as a bear."

"Cast a queer look at you?" cried Mrs. Crissey. "You certainly are mistaken. She was glad enough to get you into her house. If I thought you were not mistaken, you should never darken her doors again, even though she should come to me on bended knees!" Dolly threw her head back and her gray eyes blazed.

"Where's Jim?" asked Mr. Crissey, casting his eye down the table and hurriedly calling a mental roll.

"Oh, he'll be here in a moment. Since you are hungry, we won't wait for Jim. You can trust to a boy's appetite to tell him pretty nearly when it's supper time. Agnes and I went over to-day to look at the new house," she added, as though the news had been on her mind.

"It's perfectly elegant. It's a home!" declared Aggie, tucking her napkin into her neck.

"No, not that way, not that way!" shrieked four-year-old Dolly, as Lena attempted to tie her bib on.

"Dorothy," said the mother, "don't start that up again. If you don't let Lena tie your bib on, you can't have any currant jelly."

This threat, which the child knew was no idle one, had the desired quieting effect, as Mrs. Crissey never made idle or extravagant threats to her children.

"I ain't littler'n Aggie," grumbled Dolly, who yearned with all her small heart to wear a big-folk's napkin and tuck it about her own neck. "I'm just ezzackelly as big as she is."

Her mother put her arm around the child. "Not quite as big, darling. But you soon will be."

"To-morrow?" asked Dorothy.

"How are they getting on with the house?" inquired Edward. "Shall we be able to get into it by the first of May?"

"Oh, they'll have it done long before that. It's a beautiful house. Sometimes I'm afraid it's too fine for us. Do you think we shall be able to keep up the expenses?" Mrs. Crissey came of New England ancestry.

"Of course," she added, "I can help Lena, and I can get along with the one girl there as well as here."

"I'm sometimes sorry," said Crissey, fumbling in

his pocket for a letter, "that I did not buy a lot on the Lake Shore Drive. That's the fashionable part of the city. Here, Aggie, give this letter to mama."

There were tears in Dolly's eyes, as she finished reading and laid the missive down by her plate.

"I don't understand how they got along without you so long," she laughed, a little hysterically. "Ten thousand a year!" It seemed to her the income of a prince. It was fabulous. And yet, and yet—she must not allow herself to be betrayed into extravagance. She would get along with Lena even in the new house and with the large income.

The girl came and whispered something in Mrs. Crissey's ear. The mother rose and hastened into the kitchen, where she found Jim in a deplorable state. One eye was black and swollen, his clothing was torn, his nose was red; there was a stain of dried blood on his shirt bosom, and an ugly-looking scratch over his right eye.

"James, you've been fighting again!" gasped Mrs. Crissey, sinking into a chair. "Aren't you ever going to stop this horrible habit? Why, James, you promised your father you'd never fight again!"

"Don't tell father," pleaded the boy. "You—can lick me if you want, ma, but please don't tell father."

"I shall have to tell him, James. You'll disgrace

us all. You must be made to stop this dreadful practice." And the little woman arose with a determined air. Jim caught her sleeve and began to talk with the rapidity of desperation.

"Ma, listen a minute, can't you? Tom Wiley, he said my father was a boodler, an' that's how he got the money to build our new house, an' I licked him, an' then he took it back. An' then Jim Wiley he come along, an' Tom said he wouldn't take nothin' back, and then I licked the two of 'em, and they ran away. That was this noon; an' this evening Walt Wiley was layin' for me, an' he said everybody knew my father was a boodler, an'—an' I'd a made him take it back if a p'liceman hadn't a come along."

"Why, Walter Wiley is a much bigger boy than you," said Mrs. Crissey, "I am afraid he has hurt you terribly."

"Ho," cried Jim. "Ho, po! That's nothin'! I can stand punishment. There can't no boy call my father a boodler, not if he's as big as John L. Sullivan."

"Lena," said Mrs. Crissey, as the servant came out into the kitchen, "give James his supper out here. And—and—it isn't necessary for Mr. Crissey to know that he has come home. I shouldn't like his father to know that he had been fighting again."

You will stop fighting, won't you, Jimmy? That's mother's boy. Put some cold water on your eye. Give James some pudding, Lena."

Jim had been through a hard afternoon, and he had come home expecting further trials. This sudden let-down overcame him completely, and he blubbered as he turned on the water at the sink. When Mrs. Crissey returned she found little Dorothy, who was precocious, explaining her most recent Sunday-school lesson.

"They put Jesus on a cross," she went on, in a high, sing-song tone, "and the rooster went cock-a-doodle doo, cock-a-doodle doo, cock-a-doodle doo, cock—a—"

"There, there, that will do!" said Mrs. Crissey. "We all know how the rooster went. It's marvelous, though, how much that child does absorb from the things she hears. What did Peter do, Dolly?"

"Oh, he went out doors an' cried."

"What did he cry for?" asked the father curiously.

"'Cause he couldn't find the rooster!"

"I fear," laughed Crissey, "that the child is not laying a very sound theological foundation."

He finished his meal in haste, as he happened to think of the brief that was awaiting him in his study. Suddenly becoming abstracted, he swallowed his

dessert without knowing what it was, arose, and went to his work.

As he closed the door, he heard Dorothy, who had taken quite an interest in theological matters of late, shouting, "Jesus 'oves me, Jesus 'oves me—oh, mama, gimme some cake!"

## CHAPTER XVI

### ACCORDING TO SCHEDULE

Mr. Crissey accepted the proposition of the railroad company, and took his wife to the theater to celebrate the event. It was the first time they had been to the theater in years, and the little woman enjoyed the treat immensely. When early matrimonial life is a struggle, as had been the case with the Crisseys, people are likely to get out of the theater habit—almost to forget that such a thing as a theater exists.

During the intermission after the second act Dorothy whispered to her husband.

"Wasn't that an afternoon call, that function at the Wilsons'?"

"Well, yes," replied Edward; "it was certainly in the afternoon. Why?"

She took his program from his lap and pointed to the back. There he saw the advertisement of a fashionable tailor, in the form of a schedule, or table, headed: "What a Correctly Dressed Man



Should Wear on Various Occasions." He studied the thing carefully throughout the next act. A part of it read as follows:

Occasion.	Coat.	Waistcoat.
Day Weddings, Afternoon Calls, Reception, Teas, and Matinee.	Double Breasted Frock.	Double or Single Breasted, same Material as Coat, White or Fancy.
Trousers.	Hat.	Shirt and Cuffs.
Striped or Check Worsted, of Subdued Shade.	High Silk.	White with Square Cuffs Attached.
Collar.	Cravat.	Gloves.
Lap Front or Poke.	White or Light-Tone Ascot or Four-in-Hand.	White with Self Backs.
Shoes.	Jewelry.	
Patent Leather.	Gold Links, Gold Pin.	

"I don't think I was mistaken about that queer look in Mrs. Wilson's eye after all," he remarked that night as he was undressing for bed.

"I'll see that you never make another mistake," replied his wife grimly, laying the precious paper away in a bureau drawer. "You'll have the eyes of the world on you from now on, and there must not be the least thing to criticize."

"We must be looking for a theater program that applies to your sex also," observed the husband.

"Oh, it doesn't make so much difference about me. I can't go out in society while the children are so small. Of course, if you should be made senator or governor, I should need some dresses for official receptions. But just now, I don't care to go into society. Women's clothes are so expensive, too," she sighed.

## CHAPTER XVII

### A CHAT WITH A CYNIC

One peculiarity of the city's climate consists in the difficulty with which the two chief divisions of the year, winter and summer, die. There are cold days along in the fall which seem to presage the immediate advent of winter, but the wiseacres are pretty safe in saying, even in December, "We shall have a warm spell yet." And so in the spring-time; one can never be sure that the backbone of winter is broken. The old Frost King, like a surly dog, retires for a distance as though going, only to return again and again, and snarl and snarl. Snow-flakes in May, mingling with the early blossoms, are among the possibilities. One likes to regard this tenacity of purpose as typical of the region and the people; as related to that strong, determined spirit which takes hold and will not let go, and which scarcely recognizes the approach of death as an obstacle to indomitable will. Indeed, it is generally believed that there is a relation between the climate and the character of a nation or a people.

Indian summer, with a smile as sad and beautiful as that of an exiled princess bidding farewell to her faithful followers, has come. It is late Sunday afternoon and the broad walk on the Lake front near Nellie's flat is thronged. Nellie is seated with the artist, and Harry is walking with Roth and his wife. Grandpa Roth is wheeling a baby carriage industriously in the distance. The artist is showing a side which Nellie has not seen before; for he has for the moment forgotten his cynicism, and is carried away by the beauty of the scene and the soft, subtle allurements of the hour. The woman beside him is so beautiful and so silent that she fits into it all with perfect harmony. He is giving voice to his impressions, and Nellie feels that a vague dream is being realized. Here is indeed a taste of that culture, that higher life, for which she has yearned so long. She is sitting by a real artist, and he is talking to her as the women at the club have so often, unsuccessfully, tried to make men talk.

Oh, if they could only hear him now, and know that he was talking to her! Why will not poets discuss poetry, musicians improvise, and artists give voice to their beautiful conceptions, before admiring throngs of women and under the glare of the electric light, where their eyes can be seen?

Dare was getting old, and Nellie's charms ap-

pealed to him with tenfold force. The older a man gets the more he idealizes the women who admire him. He never becomes cynic enough in his sear and yellow years to pick flaws in the fair hands that bring him back his youth, as they might the roses of a by-gone summer.

Nellie could not understand all that Dare said, but that very fact flattered her. She meant to grasp every precious sentence with an alert and implacable memory; to write them all down, and to look up the references. Dare took off his broad hat from time to time as he talked, and ran his long, white fingers through his hair. When he pointed to the Lake or the horizon, he threw back the cape of his cloak from his shoulder with a graceful gesture—just such a gesture as Nellie had dreamed about in connection with artists. He was looking his youngest to-day.

"There is something about a day of Indian summer such as this that reminds me of certain passages in the poets," he was saying. "An indefinable something which you feel but can not express or explain; which is connected, it has always seemed to me, with the effect of sadness when combined with beauty of form. The sadness may be that of association. For instance, this day may not be more beautiful than a day in June, but we seem

to hear every breeze whispering, 'Farewell, farewell!' Every cricket chirps, 'Farewell, farewell!' Every lingering bird trills it. There are certain passages of poetry that must be read aloud if they are to produce their full effect upon the mind—for sound has its form as well as things visible. I have long ago forgotten the Greek I learned in college, but I can not read aloud even now the lament for the death of Daphnis in the first 'Idyll' of Theocritus, or the farewell of Antigone in Sophocles, without experiencing that feeling of sadness combined with beauty.

"Perfection of form is the right thing in the right place; and so perfection of form in sound may arise from the right word in the right place. But to get the fullest effect, we must understand the meaning of the words."

"How true that is," murmured Nellie. "Oh, I realize that!"

The artist went on encouraged. A man of artistic temperament will talk as far over the head of a beautiful woman as the stars are above the heads of potato blossoms; it is one of the highest tributes paid to beauty. One feels as if it must understand, since it is.

"The words may not have great meaning in themselves, but they are chosen by the poet for their as-

sociation with heart memories. This, I think, accounts for much of the beauty of Shelley's tribute to Keats, beginning, 'I mourn for Adonis; he is dead.'

"Oh, isn't that a beautiful thing!" gasped Nellie, mentally resolving to read it just as soon as she could get hold of the book, and to commit a portion of it to memory.

"Yes; sad and beautiful," affirmed Dare.

"Oh, very, very sad!" sighed Nellie.

"But the best example of this sort of thing that I remember in the whole range of literature," continued Dare, "is Tennyson's lines, beginning, 'Tears, idle tears, I know not what they mean'—can you recite them, Mrs. Chapin?"

"N—no; I don't believe I could at this moment. I have such a poor memory!"

"We are much alike in that respect," said Dare. "We can sympathize with each other. They go something like this:

*"Tears, idle tears, I know not what they mean,  
Tears from the depth of some divine despair  
Rise in the heart, and gather to the eyes,  
In looking on the happy autumn fields,  
And thinking of the days that are no more."*

"There! I believe that is actually all I can re-

member of it. Are you quite sure you can not go on?"

Nellie repeated the five lines verbatim, in a sweetly sentimental voice.

"No—" she faltered; "I—that is all I know."

"You recite very feelingly," said Dare. "Your voice lends itself to the sentiment perfectly. I should like to hear you read the poem all through—on such an evening as this will be."

"I shall not have time before this evening," said Nellie. "but I will have it learned before the next time you come out to see me, I promise you."

Dare glanced down the walk. Harry and Roth were going in the other direction. He leaned his lips close to the fresh, rounded cheek of his companion and hazarded:

"You're as kind as you are beautiful."

"Why, Mr. Dare; you mustn't flatter." But the cheek flushed maddeningly.

"You must get to work right away, for I shall come soon, I warn you. That poem of Tennyson's," he continued, "puts into words the very soul of an Indian summer day like this, which makes us think of our—our lost youth—though neither of us is old enough," he interpolated hurriedly, "to feel them in their full strength. Certainly you are not," he concluded gallantly. "See those fluffy clouds, floating



high above the water," he continued; "dark at the bottom, woolly and sun-tinted above—but I am talking too much. The way to enjoy a scene like this is in silence."

For a time they sat without speaking, during which Nellie wondered if she could not get Dare's consent to talk before the club exactly as he had been talking to her.

"Let me see," she mused, "the subject should be, 'The Influence of Poetry on Art.' Or the influence of some great poet on some great artist—Tennyson, for instance—on—on—on"—but she could not think of any artist. At last a happy thought struck her. "Why not on Mr. Dare himself?"

Just then Harry passed with Roth.

"When I get rich, Nell," he called cheerfully, "I shall buy an automobile like that one yonder. Isn't it a cracker-jack?"

She noted that his Sunday suit had a ready-made air, and that there was nothing distinctive about him. She classed him in her mind with shoe drummers and drug clerks. What could such a man talk about before a woman's club?

The balmy air, the movement of people, the bicycles, the teams, the automobiles, made Harry feel cheerful and like his old self.

"A day like this makes your husband think of

automobiles," laughed Roth, "but I would a sailing boat rather have, to sail away—away to those loafely pink clouds over yonder."

And they passed on.

"My husband associates with such common people," sighed Nellie.

"On the contrary," replied Dare, "the man seems to have some poetry in him. Germans are apt to be poetical or musical or something. And now he has made a good suggestion. If we, you and I—" but he felt that he was on dangerous ground and finished with: "Do you like sailing, Mrs. Chapin?"

"Oh, I think it would be just delightful," she replied, "if it were not so dangerous."

The artist became silent, and Nellie was sufficiently imitative to follow the example. The beauty of the scene, and the psychologic glow—for even souls have sex—awakened by the beautiful woman by his side, delighted and at the same time soothed him. Even the existence of the husband, visually evident in the distance, was not an inharmonious element in the picture at the present stage of his feelings. It added to the general impression of peacefulness and liberty.

Along the horizon, for the Lake had a horizon that day, were two or three steamers, trailing squat

feathers of black smoke. Above them were a few parallel bars of cloud, slim as the fingers of a hand, pink with the evening light. Nearer by were several trim, white yachts, with the sun glinting on their sails; and numerous little boats, scudding along, and tipping to the breeze tiny triangular patches of canvas. The calm Lake was the color of lead near the shore, but green as a lawn farther out. Frequent whiffs of wind darkened its surface as when a child breathes on a mirror. Not far out there was a flock of sea-gulls, sailing, wheeling and tumbling, with frequent flashes of white as a wing was turned toward the sun.

From the road behind could be heard the trotting of horses and the whizz of automobiles. Young couples strolled by, many of them girls not yet out of short dresses, and boys who had recently discarded rocking-horses for sweethearts. They talked in unnaturally loud tones and sought isolated places on the benches. Nearly all of the girls were chewing gum—ruminating like kine. A father and mother sat down near Nellie and the artist, and drew a baby carriage up within convenient reach.

The father took a boy of four years between his knees and said:

“You’ve had cake; you’ve had ice cream; you’ve

had cracker-jack; you've had everything that's necessary. Stop teasing; stop right immediately!" The child began to cry.

Dare arose. "Matrimony is the prose of love," he sighed. "Let's stroll."

"Oh, Mr. Dare," giggled Nellie, "do you believe that marriage is a failure?"

His cynical mood returned. "Success of matrimony depends on such small things," he replied. "Many a man's life is ruined just because his wife has an unpleasant way of clearing her throat."

"Don't you like children?" asked Nellie. "I am almost afraid I don't like them. They prevent a woman's improving her mind. Now, my husband is crazy about them."

Harry was at that moment taking the Roth baby from the carriage and tossing it up and down.

"One should not hate young babies," drawled the artist; "they are nearly as interesting as puppies."

"How dreadful you are!" laughed Nellie; and then added, remembering an expression which she had often heard, but whose meaning she did not quite understand:

"Do you believe in platonic affection, Mr. Dare?"

"There are more fatherless children born of platonic affection than of any other kind."

Nellie determined to look up the meaning of "pla-

tonic." This reply did not harmonize with the somewhat hazy impression which she had formed of the subject. She blushed slightly at the uncomfortable thought that perhaps she had asked an improper question.

"Some people claim that happy married life is heaven," continued Dare reflectively. "No one disputes that unhappy married life is hell."

"Oh!" gasped Nellie; "what strong language!"

"I beg your pardon, Mrs. Chapin. But I have no doubt that the language is no stronger than the subject demands. Think over your friends," he continued; "most of them are either just getting married or just getting divorced."

"For a marriage to be happy," added Dare, "each party must know all of the other's faults, and must know whether or not he or she can put up with them. I should think that a happy marriage, leaving out the element of luck, could only be possible after a long courtship—say, twenty-five or thirty years."

"But anybody would get sick of a person in that length of time!" cried Nellie.

"Then they wouldn't marry. Were it not that couples are apt to become odious to each other, the institution of matrimony would not be necessary."

"Do you know it's almost six o'clock?" asked Harry, coming up. "It's supper time."

"Are you hungry?" inquired Dare good-naturedly.

"Hungry as a bear. Won't you come home and take pot-luck with us? Nell, what have you got for supper?"

Nellie was so evidently embarrassed that Dare refused, saying gracefully that he would be glad to come some other time when he would not take them so by surprise.

"It will give me an excuse for coming again," he murmured, as he walked toward the house with Mrs. Chapin, while Harry followed with the Roths.

"What a woman-hater you must be!" exclaimed Nellie.

"I a woman-hater? One reason for my hating matrimony is that it—ah—sometimes ties a beautiful woman up so that—ah—another man has no right to make love to her."

"Do you believe that people sometimes die for love?"

"Oh, yes, indeed. Between the people who are dying for love, and those who are dying to get away from their life partners, the coroner is kept pretty prosperous."

"I do so wish you would talk on this subject before the club. I have been so interested!"

Dare laughed.

"I will come and talk to you as often as you will let me, but never before the club. My limitations include the inability to talk to more than one woman at once, and even then she must be a good listener. Among your many virtues I find that you possess the golden gift of being a good listener!"

"Flattering again!"

"No, I assure you. The great stumbling block of your charming sex, Mrs. Chapin, is fluency. Put a shallow woman through school, and she simply learns the names of more subjects to talk ignorantly about. Now you, you never speak without having something to say. Who is that unprepossessing lady who just saluted you?"

"That? Why, that's our landlady—the woman who owns the house where we live. Why?"

"Oh, nothing. Mere idle curiosity, sharpened somewhat by her peculiar style of beauty. She belongs to that class of women who look like wax figures whose faces have melted and run a little."

Nellie was vastly amused. We do not love those to whom it is necessary to make regular payments of money, no matter how just the claim.

"I should hate to have you down on me," she laughed. "Wonder what you would say behind my back?"

"I could never say anything truthfully, except that you are the most beautiful and charming woman I ever met."

"Why, Mr. Dare! And suppose my husband should hear you? He might think it funny to hear you paying me such extravagant compliments."

"I wouldn't hurt his feelings for the world," whispered Dare. "He seems a good sort. Though how he ever won such a woman will always be a mystery to me!"

"Let's all make up a party and go down to Ma'am Galli's some night," cried Harry, coming up. "It's the greatest macaroni joint in town. I suppose all artists like macaroni and spaghetti and that sort of thing?"

"Oh, yes; it's our natural food; we thrive on it as the ancient Israelites did upon manna. I always take a straight spaghetti diet for two weeks before beginning a picture."

"You're stringin' me now," laughed Harry.

It did not occur to Nellie to be offended by any of Dare's remarks derogatory to matrimony or to her own sex. She was no champion of her sex or of the marriage relation. She was, first of all, a hero



worshiper; and she believed that in the artist she had found the real thing.

Dare ate his dinner at the Rienzi, and then walked in the park to smoke his cigar. He strolled toward the Lake, passing the very bench whereon Harry had proposed to the girl with the red-gold hair.

"The world is divided into two kinds of fools," he muttered as he reached the breakwater, "old fools and young fools."

A few pairs of lovers were sitting on the benches, at long distances apart. The maidens were leaning fondly against their swains in sweet, primeval surrender. The couples stopped talking as he passed.

There was a one-third moon in the sky, and an infinite, silver twinkling on the water, a pallor sad as love's sad smile. Bicycle lamps, like will-o'-the-wisps, went drifting by. A distant lighthouse opened and closed its fiery eye, like a watch dog half asleep. The silken skirts of the queen of lakes rustled at the city's feet.

Dare sat down and smoked a while in silence.

"A man can't lie to himself about his age," he grumbled. "Dare, you old fool, you'll be fifty in three months."

He rose, stretched wearily, and sat down again.

"A man of my age grabs at a thing like this as a

drowning man at a straw. It may be his last chance. When the heart gets to work it shakes an old carcass more violently than it does a young one. Dry timber burns more fiercely than green."

As he reached the road an empty cab came by, and he hailed it.

"I might induce her to go to Paris," he mused as he settled himself on the seat and fumbled in his pocket for a cigarette. "But then her husband would get a divorce, and she'd bedevil me to marry her."

And this thought troubled him.

## CHAPTER XVIII

### THE CITY FATHERS

If the city, with its stern, deep cañons, its pall of drifting smoke, its dark buildings, its titanic roar, its pallid throngs hurrying hither and yon like ghosts in the wan purlicus of hell, be justly comparable to a capital of Dis, then the City Hall is the one building which, more than all others, is the palace of its king. For greed is the modern Pluto, and upon one body which meets in the City Hall are directed all the blandishments, all the intrigue, all the influence of which the great god Mammon is capable.

The city fathers are too often, like the evil one himself, fathers of lies and iniquity. They are too often chamberlains, spies, lackeys, of the king of corruption. The Common Council has been in times past, and may be again, nothing more than the court of this ruler of American cities.

In appearance and situation, this building is well fitted to play the rôle which we have ascribed to it.

It is located in the very heart of feverish strife, clamor, and pitiless ugliness. About its somber battlements the smoke settles thickest, and the soot is coated upon it in scales. It radiates a chill shadow as a vast block of ice might throw off cold, and the blessed sunlight rarely penetrates to the streets which surround it, even in the middle of the day. It is the heaviest and most forbidding structure on the whole earth, and reminds one of a gigantic mausoleum, or a tremendous boulder hurled there by Jove to keep a buried Saturn quiet through countless ages. So gloomy is this structure, so thoroughly is darkness one of its attributes, that the electric bulbs at the desks of the workers make tiny points of light, as seen by the passer-by, and their rays do not appear to penetrate the surrounding gloom.

Roll the world back a few hundred years, and one would surely find over the principal entrance the motto, "Leave hope behind, all ye who enter here." What chambers of horror can one not imagine within such gloomy and mysterious walls; what hooded inquisitors; what forgotten dungeons, what underground passages, dank with dripping moisture and leading to slow torture and unknown deaths!

Such dungeons and cells do not exist; yet in one

room of this building has been enacted more iniquity than has ever before been crowded into an equal amount of inclosed space. Men have delivered their souls here, after deliberately selling them; they have forsworn themselves; they have betrayed mankind as foully as ever did Judas. And yet in the Senate chamber meet once a week the men to whom are intrusted in great measure the health of thousands of little children and of the poor; the morals of a generation, its comfort, safety and education; its physical and esthetic welfare. One would suppose that the most ignorant and depraved atoms of a great commonwealth, through the instinct of self-preservation alone, would vote only for men of high character as members of this vital body. Alas! somehow, wolves that do not even take the trouble to put on sheep's clothing often get into it with full power to vote away the people's money. Incredible as it may seem, even saloon-keepers have been found there. Of late, thanks to the vigilance of the Municipal League, a higher standard of character has prevailed, and the elevating process, begun some time ago, is still going on.

During Edward Crissey's incumbency of office, however, things were about as bad as they well could be, and the respectable element, of which he

was the leader, was largely in the minority. "The alderman business" was good. It was rumored that as high as fifty thousand dollars had been offered for votes by certain corporations, desiring long extensions of franchise. Fifty thousand dollars is a smart sum for a worthless, ignorant scalawag with a genius for ward politics; it means affluence to a prognathous keeper of a levee dive.

Crissey heard no more of Murchison and the telephone scheme for some time after the memorable interview in the Magnate's office. The lawyer knew, however, that the matter had not been dropped, for the simple reason that men of Murchison's stamp do not drop things. Mammon works slowly, cautiously, but persistently. Setting the lowest possible standard for humanity, and believing in man's weakness and ultimate depravity, it keeps its emissaries continually on the alert, casting their lines with all the cunning of the most skilful fisherman. And the genius of greed, like any other manifestation of genius, knows how to wait. If one body of men prove unavailable, it looks into the future, and goes patiently about securing more promising material.

But now the telephone ordinance has again hobbled up. It has been referred to the appropriate committee, and is likely to be brought to vote on

this very evening which finds Edward Crissey striding vigorously toward the City Hall. As he reaches the corner of Madison Street, he is met by a little man whom he has often seen about the building, and whose clean-shaven, insignificant face he has sometimes noticed in the visitors' gallery at the Council meetings. He has never connected him with any particular business there, but has thought of him, when at all, as one of the people who take an interest in legislative proceedings; men who are looking for cheap amusement, who are indirectly interested in some ordinance, or whose friends are to be benefited by the passage of some measure.

"Good evening, Alderman," says this little man, pronouncing the magic word alderman with as much reverence as though it had been senator; "going to the Council?"

"Yes; just on my way," replied Crissey, with that cordiality which made him so many friends.

"Believe I'll walk back with you," said the little man, "if you'll permit me. I've nowhere else to go this evening. Will there be a lively session, do you think?"

"It all depends on what measures come up," replied the alderman, "and—and—who's there."

"Yes, that's so. By the way, there's likely to be a fight over that telephone matter. I'm glad now

I thought of going back. They say Murchison is using wads of money to carry his point." The roar of the traffic was so great at this point that the little man was obliged to dance along on tiptoe and shout in his companion's ear.

"Indeed!" exclaimed Crissey, forging ahead and not so much as looking down.

"Yes. A friend told me that he was offering as high as ten thousand dollars apiece to scrub aldermen, and that he would be willing to give more to two or three of the leaders."

Crissey made no reply, but the faintest smile imaginable, an amused smile, played for a brief moment about his lips.

They entered the building together, and the little man trotted along by his side. Just before they reached the elevator, the latter remarked:

"That was probably a mistake about the ten thousand dollars. I guess my friend was only joking."

"Very likely," grunted Crissey. He knew now why this creature was a frequenter of the City Hall.

The alderman entered the Council chamber, took his seat, and hung his overcoat on a projection of the desk behind him. The honorable mayor, already in his chair, was lighting a long, black cigar; and the air of the room was opaque with tobacco smoke. Several of the saloon-keeping "fathers"



were smoking their own goods, brought from dives notorious for the vileness of their purveyance.

His Honor sat at a raised desk, beneath a great eagle carved in wood, and bearing the motto, "State Sovereignty." He was a handsome young man, with a destiny and a mustache. The former was as expansive as a horizon from which clouds are rolling away; for it took in the State Capitol, and sometimes even the White House flickered dimly on its outer rim like a distant mirage. The latter was jammed up under his nostrils in such a way that it resembled those toy mustaches which fakirs sell in the streets. His cheeks were red and boyish, and there was about the configuration of his nose a hint of that dish-faced effect which has marked a whole line of American statesmen.

Two youths in the gallery were leaning over the railing and pointing out the dignitaries below. Members were strolling about and chatting with one another, even though the meeting had already been called to order. Crissey cast his eye over the semi-circular row of seats behind him, and noticed that there was a full attendance.

A representative of the Municipal League—a bright-eyed young man with a long, narrow face, and a bald spot sprinkled with a sparse second growth of fine hair, which he nervously rubbed

every moment to see if it was still there—stood just below the mayor, and watched the proceedings keenly. He held a long slip in his hand, a list of the aldermen, and made a record of their votes on every question.

The clerk, stationed at a lectern, was reading in a monotonous sing-song from a pile of manuscripts measures that were being submitted. He had copied the mayor's voice and expression to such a degree that he seemed, as indeed he was, a mere echo of that great man. At regular intervals the clerk launched his voice into space, with always the same intonations, and paused a moment while he took breath.

"That permission be and hereby is granted—for a period of five years from the passage hereof—to the L. J. McCormick estate, to construct and maintain bay windows at the building on the southeast corner—of Madison and La Salle Streets, one of said windows to be on the La Salle Street side—"

He was a man transformed into a mere vocal machine, as expressionless as an ossified man telling his story to an audience in a dime museum. As he finished each manuscript, voices were heard from various parts of the chamber:

"Publish."

"No! No! Don't want to publish."

"File."

"Refer to the Committee on Streets and Alleys West."

"Finance! Finance!"

There was a continual murmur of talk.

Occasionally his Honor scratched a match and relighted his cigar, which had a remarkable facility for going out, or tapped on the desk with a gavel of black wood and cried in a perfunctory tone,

"Aldermen will please take their seats."

One of the city fathers, an Irishman with a very red face and the humorous gray eyes of his native land, was as drunk as Father Noah.

"What is it?" he shouted, suddenly starting to his feet and swaying about as he supported himself by resting both hands on his desk.

"What is it, Alderman?" inquired his Honor, looking up from a pile of papers.

"Well, I don't know what it is," replied the legislator, scratching his head and gazing comically about.

"The alderman had better go to sleep again," muttered the mayor, loudly enough to be heard, a recommendation which was promptly followed.

Later the same gentleman awoke again, and demanded fiercely:

"Wait a minute—wait a minute. Whur's all this

goan to be done? In the Sixt' war-rd? There's so much done in Woodlawn an' the Sixt' war-rd that we're gittin' tired of it. We'd like to know whur it's goan to be done?"

*A voice:* "Oh, all over the city."

"Not on your loife."

*His Honor:* "Order, gentlemen; order."

When the measure prohibiting the sale of intoxicating liquors in closed rooms was put to vote, this alderman awoke instinctively. He did not become sober enough to make his great speech on the motion, however, until a *confrère* had spoken, a gentleman who resembled a Scotch divine, and was known as the Old Gray Wolf. He rose limply, it is true, but did not find his voice before the roll had been called, and the voting nearly done. Then he extended his hand and shouted again his favorite expression: "Wait a minute—wait a minute."

"You say it will close up every hotel in the city," he began. "I say rather it will d-rive those poor devils in there who feel the need of a dr-rink and haven't the money to pay f'r a room. An' the man who wishes to take his wife in f'r a dr-rink, or his wife's frind—er his frind's wife—" Tumultuous applause and laughter.

"What'er alderman is not guilty," shouted the

orator, "let him hold up his hand. This ahrdinance won't hold wather, annyway."

*Voice:* "It isn't meant to—"

"Nur anny other liquid," concluded the orator, collapsing.

Crissey was amused and slightly disgusted by these proceedings, but took no part in them, further than to vote against the wine rooms. The next thing in order of business was the telephone ordinance, which came up for a final reading at a late hour. Its wording was brief, and it provided for an extension of the existing company's charter for a period of fifty years.

During its reading the chamber was a trifle more noisy than usual, as though some matter of minor importance were being introduced. The representative of the Municipal League noticed, however, that the noise was being made entirely by the less reputable element. The faithful were on the alert. The measure was introduced by one of the professional aldermen—a member who had no other visible means of support than his connection with the chamber. He spoke quite fluently and speciously of the benefits to be derived by the people of the city from this measure. It would put the company on a sounder financial basis and allow it to float its bonds more easily. The plant could be im-

proved in all its details; necessary repairs be made, and new appliances put in; more expensive and therefore better operators and employees could be secured; and better service promised. Finally, the company would be enabled, immediately or in the near future, to make a lower rate for the public telephones, a universal rate within the city, in fact, of five cents. Several other members spoke briefly to the same effect, and the emissary of the Municipal League took down their names with great care.

Then Crissey arose, ran his fingers through his white hair, thrust his hands into his pockets, and addressed the chair. He spoke slowly and without the least excitement.

"Your Honor," he said, "I have been twice offered large sums of money to support this ordinance—once some time ago, and again to-night. I presume that the emissary of the company who approached me to-night was not aware that I had already been approached by his superiors, because he ingenuously mentioned a sum much lower than the value which I am supposed by those of larger experience to possess."

When Crissey wished to be ironical he generally became ponderous.

"I will not follow the example set by my *confrère* on the left who made the eloquent speech on the

wine-room ordinance, and ask those who have been approached similarly with myself to hold up their right hands. I will only say that every man who votes for this iniquitous measure, does so—"

Cries of, "Stop! Stop!" "Call him to order!" "Sit down!" "Don't you go too far!" "Hypocrite!"

But Crissey's voice swelled above the uproar, distinct and perfectly audible—"does so with full knowledge of the fact that I, at least, have been offered a bribe. That I did not accept it is evident from the fact that I am going to vote against this iniquitous bill. We are already in the power of the gas trust, and we are paying twice as much as we ought for every foot of gas that we burn. We are already in the power of the traction trust, and we have the worst system of surface railroads in the world. You know what will happen if we put the people of this town in the hands of the telephone company; poorer service if possible, more exasperating appliances, and perhaps, God knows, even higher prices. If the thing should come up again fifty years from now, the company would ask for a hundred-year extension, and would be able to pay aldermen one hundred thousand apiece for their votes."

The eloquent Irishman jumped to his feet.

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"He's heard that br-bribes were bein' offered," he cried, "and he's hot because none of 'em came his way!"

"Sit down, you drunken loafer," commanded Crissey.

"Don't yer call me a loafer, ye hypocrite!" and he started for Crissey, but two or three of those nearest to him seized him and forced him back into his seat.

Serious violence was feared, as the enraged Irishman was known to carry a knife, with which he had once disemboweled an enemy in a saloon brawl. Pandemonium reigned for several minutes, and above the hubbub could be heard the steady "tap, tap, tap" of his Honor's gavel. Order was at last restored, and the motion was put. It was lost by three votes.



## CHAPTER XIX

### THE HEART OF THE CYNIC

The artist was giving Nellie a French lesson one morning in December. He had solved the problem of regular visits by proposing bi-weekly conversational lessons, and she had jumped eagerly at this opportunity for mental improvement.

"It's so kind of you," she gushed, "to think of wasting your precious time on poor me! I should feel like a criminal. No one person has a right to monopolize a great genius like you."

The artist winced a trifle at the extravagance and directness of this praise; there was so much of the conventional woman's adoration for genius, real or imaginary, in it. But he was an artist; and the lips that uttered the sentiment were pretty, and the big hazel eyes, with the reddish gleam, had been very, very serious.

"Oh, my own French is not any too good," he replied. "I need a little practice, and I've no doubt you speak as well as I do. No American ever

learns real French anyway. The French spoken by foreigners is a sort of Volapük; useful all over the world, but it's not French. The wonder of the whole matter is that the French themselves understand it."

He found it necessary to begin with the simplest sentences; for Nellie's lessons, pursued now for nearly two years with intermittent zeal, had resulted only in the ability to say, "*Bon jour*," "*Comment vous portez-vous?*" "*Parlez-vous français?*" and "*Je ne vous comprends pas*."

Her pronunciation, as the artist soon found, was hopeless. Nellie quite prided herself on her pronunciation, as her teacher at the Newberry gave her considerable encouragement in this particular. Nellie imagined, moreover, that though she could not speak fluently, she could understand everything that was said.

"I may miss a word now and then," she was in the habit of explaining, "but I get the general sense of it all, just the same as if it were English!" Like the other women in the class, she usually had her version of the lectures in French, and could tell quite fluently what had been said.

The strange thing was that each member had a widely different version, and that each confidently believed that she had comprehended everything.

Heated discussions were the result, amounting sometimes almost to quarrels. The teacher's chief skill lay in the settling of these disputes, for he possessed a way of apparently harmonizing the numerous versions of his discourse and of making each pupil think that he had said exactly what she imagined.

"That's the funny thing about it," Nellie was explaining to Dare, as the two sat in her window that December morning looking out over the Lake. "No matter how fast any one talks, I can understand, but I can not reply—that is, of course, if they talk good French."

She was dressed in a blue flannel waist, with perpendicular bands of oriental trimming. She had applied a little rouge judiciously to her cheeks, and the blue of her waist added, by color effect, to the richness and warmth of their glow. Dare had felt chilly coming up on the car.

"Still, the only way to learn to converse is to talk every opportunity that you get," he observed. "I remember an experience of mine years ago, when I was going from Brindisi to Rome by rail—"

"Oh, how delightful it must be to travel in those foreign countries!" exclaimed Nellie, with a far-away look in her eyes.

"This particular journey is about the most tedious

on the face of the globe. Well, there was a mysterious, Frenchy-looking person in the compartment with me—dark, with waxed mustaches, sharp as needles, and a pointed little beard—

"How interesting those foreigners are!" sighed Nellie.

"We had been traveling for hours through the flattest, hottest and dustiest landscape imaginable. I grew dreadfully bored, and looked furtively at my traveling companion many times. I was sure he could speak French—"

"Every educated person over there does."

"And I remembered my teacher's parting injunction to seize every opportunity to talk, talk, talk. So I summoned up courage at last to say to him in my best Ollendorffian, '*Parlez-vous français?*' He smiled in the politest manner imaginable, moved toward me and talked fluently for about five minutes, finishing with a question, as was evident from his rising reflection. Of course, I didn't understand a word, so I replied with the only other sentence that I really knew that seemed appropriate, '*Je ne vous comprends pas.*' He glared at me, and moved suddenly to the other end of the seat. Every few moments during the remainder of the journey he looked at me out of the corner of his dark eye in the most extraordinary manner. I don't know

whether he thought that I meant to insult him, or whether he feared that I was a madman."

"Oh, how perfectly dreadful that must have been!" gasped Nellie. "I don't know what I should have done. Maybe he talked too fast. Why didn't you say to him, '*Parlez plus longtemont? Je nee vous comprong pas?*' Do you know—" and she leaned toward the artist as though she were making a confession, "that sometimes even yet, when they talk too fast, I can't follow them. Why, you couldn't understand English if it were all run together in one word. I went the other night to hear Sarah Bernhardt. There was a Frenchman came out before the play began and delivered a lecture on Madame Bernhardt's art. He talked just like this: 'Ng, ng, ng—crrrr—.'" The recollection made Nellie quite indignant. "All I could understand was, ever so often, '*Sah-ah Behn-hah, Sah-ah Behn-hah—*.'" "

Dare had never heard her pronounce two French words so perfectly before.

"I don't believe he spoke French very perfectly, anyway," concluded Nellie. "He probably came from one of the provinces. They say they have all sorts of dialects over there. Of course, our teacher gives us nothing but the pure Parisian."

"Well, let's get down to business," said Dare.

"I'll tell you what we'll do. You read me some of these sentences from the book, and I'll translate. Then I'll read, and you can translate."

"Ahem!" complied Nellie. "*Mong ongle ah ung fil et oon feel.*"

"My uncle has one son and one daughter. But pardon me; you must pronounce *f-i-l-s*, *fees*. It's an exception, you know."

"Didn't I say *fees*?" asked Nellie sweetly. "It was just a slip of the tongue. Of course I knew better. Now the next sentence: '*J'ai zoo tong frère et ta ser.*'"

"I have seen your brother and your sister."

"How perfectly you understand the French, Mr. Dare! You must feel right at home in *Parce*. Oh, tell me about *Parce*! Isn't it a wonderful city? There must be so many opportunities there to cultivate one's mind!"

"I believe I'd rather be in Naples than anywhere else at this moment," replied Dare, "except right here;" and his faded eyes looked long into the hazel orbs bent so earnestly upon him, until she comprehended his meaning, blushed slightly, and looked down.

"Tell me about Naples," she murmured.

Dare glanced out of the window. "This doesn't remind one much of the Mediterranean," he sighed.

Nellie dropped the exercise book into her lap and folded her hands over it. "Why not?" she asked.

"Well principally, because this body of water is so unfriendly looking. Sails are so infrequent on it, for instance. The Mediterranean is dotted so thickly with sailing craft, flitting here and there, that it seems to be inhabited. This Lake is wild, lonely, savage. Moreover, it has no horizon as a general thing, but ends abruptly in clouds, or smoke, or mist. Now that scene out of the window has something about it that reminds me of *Doré* or *Dante*."

There lay a stretch of sand, patched with dead grass and bristling with the stalks of last summer's weeds; in the midst of it, one stunted tree, utterly bare of leaves and strangely twisted by the winds. The telegraph poles along the drive resembled a row of heathen crosses. The air was a bluish-gray, and the Lake as black as ink, save where, over its vast surface, the oncoming waves whitened in long windrows of foam.

Where the waves beat against the breakwater, they leaped to an immense height, in fleeting watery spirals or branching trees of spray, that bent instantly shoreward and fell in rain upon the walk. Two or three sea-gulls, wild and joyous, disported above the turbulent waters, buoyant creatures of

the wind. Their slightest wing-beats carried them with far sweeps through the air, and there was something magical in the way they took form from the low clouds or were blotted out again. They seemed to be tiny bits of cloud, blown loose, and changed for a brief moment into birds.

"Naples," said the artist, and his voice took on a tender note; "ah, if we were sitting now upon the balcony of a little hotel upon the Posilipo in the balmy, dreamy air, with the sunny, light-hearted city below us—the ancient city of love and poetry—and with the vineyards above us. Yonder is the Bay of Naples, covered thick with sails, as light and fleet as birds. What does Read say?"

"Opie Read?" asked Nellie. "Has he been to Naples?"

"No; the poet Read—Buchanan Read:

*"My soul to-day  
Is far away,  
Sailing the Vesuvian bay;  
My wingéd boat,  
A bird afloat,  
Swims round the purple peaks remote.  
Round purple peaks  
It sails, and seeks  
Blue inlets and their crystal creeks.  
Where high rocks throw—throw—*



"I forget that stanza. I used to know the whole thing by heart. But I can give the third stanza, anyway. Let's see. Oh, yes—

*"Far, vague, and dim  
The mountains swim;  
While on Vesuvius' misty brim,  
With outstretched hands,  
The gray smoke stands  
O'erlooking the volcanic lands."*

"Oh, isn't that lovely," sighed Nellie. "So—so soulful.

"Y—es," replied the artist, "it does seem to breathe the very spirit of the scene. And if we lift our eyes from the bay, we see, sometimes floating in the very sky, so blue are the waters, the islands of Capri and Ischia. And the other side of the bay is skirted with white, straggling villages, in any one of which a man might dream and paint his life away. And we must not forget old Vesuvius, lifting a huge black tree of smoke against the sky by day, and its eternal torch by night. At night, if we were sitting there together, sitting there on our balcony, eh—you and I, we should see a festival, a carnival, of lights; the street lamps, running in parallel rows, the lanterns flitting about

on the bay, the groups and lines of lights where the fishing villages are, and the great, red, fierce eye of Vesuvius, high up against a black wall of night."

Nellie sat with her pretty mouth open, her eyes glistening.

"Oh, how I should like to travel!" she murmured.

"Perhaps your husband will take you over to Europe," suggested the artist, with a sickly smile. "I should very much like to meet you over there. I have about decided to go in the spring."

"Oh, I should so like to visit those scenes with you, and just look at them while you talked! It would seem as if the cities and mountains and all those places, you know, were just telling me about themselves!"

Dare's sallow cheeks flushed, and he slid eagerly forward to the edge of his chair.

"But my husband could never go. Old Blodgett goes away every summer, and he doesn't work half as hard as Harry does."

"It is surprising how much oftener the heads of any great firm need rest than their employees," observed the artist, saved for the moment by the shadow of his cynical self. "Old Blodgett," he remarked irrelevantly, "gives a great deal to charity, doesn't he?"

"So they say," replied Nellie, "but I never actually heard of any one being helped by him."

"Perhaps he is following the scriptural injunction. Perhaps he gives his alms so secretly that not even the poor find them out!"

Nellie laughed her explosive little laugh. Dependent people always enjoy jokes at the expense of those whose bread they are eating. They can not help feeling that it ought to be cake with marmalade.

Dare noted his advantage.

"Blodgett is one of those rich men who die, and people say, 'What a long funeral!' " he added.

As he arose at last to go and put on his cloak, he pointed out of the window, saying:

"See how the wind blows! Notice that lone bicyclist, beating against the wind, bent low over his wheel. There, he has got off. He reminds me of the last rose of summer—affects me the same way. And see that fat woman, sailing against the wind. She walks fast, though. Did you ever observe, Mrs. Nellie—excuse me, Mrs. Chapin—that fat women always walk fast? They do it to give an idea of sprightliness."

"It's rather too warm for a sealskin," remarked Nellie, with a slight tone of envy in her voice.

"Oh, a woman never feels too warm in a real seal-skin," replied Dare.

At the door he held Nellie's plump, unresisting hand for two or three minutes, as he tried to think of something else to say.

"Let's see," he remarked twice, "our next lesson is Thursday morning."

And Nellie answered each time:

"We haven't studied much French this morning."

"That girl upstairs," he remarked, still holding the hand and looking into the hazel eyes with an expression entirely foreign to the sentiment on his lips, "plays the piano according to Scripture."

"How so?"

"Her right hand doesn't know what her left hand doeth."

"What a severe critic you are! I'm glad I don't play. I should be frightened to death to play for you."

"Would you be frightened of me?" he asked tenderly, giving the hand a little squeeze. "Do I seem so terrible to you? Oh, hear that girl! Musicians are the only artists anyway that don't need any brains."

"Do you think so? I ought to make a good musician, then."

"Don't slander yourself so; I won't allow it,"

and, pulling her gently toward him, he attempted to kiss her. Nellie yielded for the briefest instant, and her red-gold hair brushed against his faded cheek. Then she suddenly recovered herself, not angry, but frightened, all her early religious training awakening like a sleeping watch-dog.

"You mustn't, you mustn't!" she gasped. "Oh, how dangerous you are!" And she pushed him away.

"Forgive me," he murmured. "I forgot myself." His throat was so dry that he could scarcely speak. "Will you forgive me?"

"Will you promise never to forget yourself again?"

"On my word of honor."

"Then I forgive you. I believe you to be a gentleman, and I so enjoy your society! It is so—so improving to my mind."

"May I come next Thursday?"

"Since I have your promise."

"Good morning, Mrs. Chapin."

"Good morning, Mr. Dare." Nellie's voice was very low, and she looked down. At the bottom of the stairs Dare looked up. Nellie was standing at the head of the flight.

"*Bon jour*," said the artist, lifting his hat.

"*Bong jour*," replied Nellie.

At the corner Dare went into a saloon and took a drink. He was trembling like a leaf. He sat down at a table, ordered another drink, and reflected, while he allowed his nerves to quiet down and his old heart to stop beating.

"This is dirty business," he mused. "That poor devil of a husband has such confidence in me. But then, there's no friend so true that he won't tempt his friend's wife. Bah! Am I getting superstitious? What shall it profit a man if he lose the whole world and find that he have no soul? Now let me see, let me see. Am I getting all mixed up with this woman, just because her hair is a reddish brown, her eyes a reddish hazel, and she has a figure like the Venus Anadyomene? No, I'm getting mixed up with her because I can't stay away from her, because she goes all through me, and because she likes me. She must have brains."

As he passed out of the saloon, he stopped a moment and looked in the plate-glass mirror of the screen. His cheeks were flushed, and his eyes were unnaturally bright.

"Dare, old boy, you're renewing your youth," he quizzed as he walked briskly down the street.

"How dangerous you are!" he chuckled. "I'm not one of those idiots who like everything good

except women." And he hummed a tune, in a fair tenor, a trifle cracked:

*"C'est mon ami, rendez-le-moi,  
J'ai son amour, il a ma foi!"*

Nellie's hair was ruffled and she stepped to the glass to rearrange it. Then, picking up the French exercise book again, she mechanically turned its pages as she reviewed mentally the conversation of the morning, trying to recall all the bright things that the artist had said. But all of a sudden, as she chanced to glance out of the window at the bleak winter prospect, one sentence of his came into her mind, and she sat repeating it over and over.

"He is going away in the spring: he is going away in the spring."



## CHAPTER XX

### A GERMAN CHRISTMAS

Nellie went away during the Christmas holidays to spend a week with her father at the old home. She asked Harry to accompany her. The thought of a visit to the parental home made her feel unromantic. She had an instinctive desire to appear before her family and her old neighbors in the light of an efficient housewife, well married to a devoted husband. She felt that there would be a distinct triumph in this. She had left home to become a shop-girl; she could return the wife of a successful business man. She had in her mind's eye two or three young ladies who would be made sad by her success. She even planned the clothing that she would buy for Harry as well as for herself.

But for once Harry asserted himself. He had a secret horror that the old man might sometime come to live with them, or at least make them a protracted visit. He was not shrewd enough to perceive that Nellie herself was his surest defense against any



such tragedy. She would have died of mortification had she been compelled to introduce the queer old fanatic who had given her life, to the elegant and cynical Mr. Dare. The letters which came from time to time, advising Harry against tobacco, card-playing and dancing, were no longer amusing. Mr. Aikin evidently labored under the idea that his daughter and son-in-law were leading "butterfly lives," as he expressed it, one long whirl of careless, godless gaiety. Each letter made it more evident that he thought it his duty to come on to Chicago and straighten the young people out.

"When you begin really to enjoy a thing," he wrote again and again, "then's the time to call a halt. When you find your cigars tasting pretty good, then stop and think."

Nellie wrote him that they had stopped card-playing in the house, and the old gentleman devoted many pages of congratulation to the subject, illustrating his thoughts with scriptural quotations. As a matter of fact, Mrs. Chapin was too absorbed in improving her mind to waste her evenings playing cards with her husband, but she knew how to manage her father. When he really set his head upon gaining a victory over the powers of darkness, it was necessary to let him have his way.

Concerning the dancing, it was not so easy to

satisfy him, and there was actual danger of his coming to them to make sure. He also wished to pin Harry down, personally, as to his belief in the lake of fire and brimstone. His son-in-law had never given him a definite answer on this point, and the old gentleman had prepared a vast array of biblical quotations which he considered overwhelming.

Harry refused to go with so much evident horror that Nellie let him off with little urging. To her he pleaded the impossibility of getting away, but to himself he muttered:

"Not on your tintype! I can't stand for the old geezer; I won't stand for him. He's the worst ever. I didn't marry the whole family."

After Nellie was gone, Harry returned to the flat and tried to imagine that he was single again. The rooms, however, did not look homelike to him in the light of reminiscence. His old tobacco stand and the few relics of his bachelor days filled him with melancholy. Wherever he turned he found evidences that he was married. If he looked in a closet to see if there was a little spare change in another pair of trousers, he plunged into a dark medley of feminine garments, and ten to one could not even find the trousers. There was an illusive smell of femininity about his bedroom which it

would have taken months to smoke out, and he was constantly finding long, red-gold hairs clinging to the furniture. In his bachelor days, the discovery by his landlady of a long hair in his apartments would have been subject for much good-natured badinage. Now it was no joke. It was a matter of course, a stern, unromantic reminder of the fact that he was a married man with responsibilities.

Once, after lighting the gas over the table in the parlor and becoming absorbed in George Ade's "Doc Horne," he went into the bedroom to look for a match on the dresser, and he found a ring of red-gold hair, one of those which his wife twisted around her finger when performing her toilet. The hotel on State Street, with its vividly drawn characters and the scenes that he knew so well, vanished in an instant, and his wife seemed to be in the room, making her infinite preparations for bed.

So strongly did the voices of his lost youth call to him that he would even have flirted with the servant girl; not from any definite evil motives, but simply to gratify a certain craving for liberty which God has planted in the human breast and which becomes a noble impulse when well directed.

But that female was wrapped up, soul and body, in the butcher's boy, and was taking advantage of her mistress's absence to the fullest extent. Harry

heard loud squeals and deep guffaws coming from the kitchen long after he had gone to bed, and the girl was red-eyed and disheveled by day. She dumped his food on the table, either burned or half-cooked, and disappeared into the rear of the house. During the progress of each meal it was necessary for him to rise half a dozen times and make extended searches for the salt, for a napkin, for spoons.

Sometimes, when the guffaws were too annoying, he felt an impulse to invade the kitchen and send her packing, but he remembered that Nellie owed her for several weeks, and that it was almost impossible to get a girl at any price.

He would have liked to spend his evenings downtown, take dinner at Ma'am Galli's or at St. Hubert's Inn. But one must have five or ten dollars in his pocket for a convivial evening at those places; and Harry had settled down to the steady daily allowance of the married man on a small salary—his car fare to the office and back, thirty cents for his lunch, and ten cents for a cigar. It was absolutely necessary to limit the expenses this way, or the butcher and baker and candlestick-maker, people of immemorial greed, would have remained unsatisfied. Every cent of his salary was accounted for, and to take five dollars out of it any week

would be as impossible as to steal it from one of Blodgett and Blodgett's commissions.

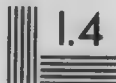
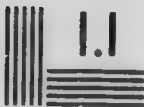
On Christmas Eve the Roths set up a Christmas tree. Harry had been forewarned of the great event and he practised the severest economy for two weeks, even denying himself cigars, that he might buy toys. He was more pinched financially during his wife's absence than when she was at home, as he found little difference in the bills, and she had taken numerous presents home with her to her father and sisters. He lacked his wife's aplomb, moreover, in the matter of putting off creditors. When she was at home, he generally managed to get out of the way when the doorbell rang; and Nellie would dismiss the men with the bills with all the dignity and graciousness of a great lady. Now that she was gone, the servant would hunt him up, with, "There's a gentleman at the dhoor to see ye," and he would look into the dark hall, standing first on one leg and then on the other, profoundly annoyed and embarrassed. If he had any money in his pocket he always gave it over without the least hesitation. As a single man, he had taken pride in paying promptly and in giving the impression that he was a man of substance.

He managed to scrape together three dollars for Christmas gifts, and he got his money back ten



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times in childish joy as he wandered among the crowded aisles of the department stores, looking for things to buy Fritz, Bismarck Goethe and Frieda. Not one should be forgotten. He would even get some little thing for father and mother Roth, if he could make his money stretch far enough. Yes, old Roth, with his shaggy head and hairy face, should not be forgotten. As he danced the three silver dollars up and down in his pocket, he could hear their faint jingling, and they rang a tender chime of love and peace and good will to all the world. The thousands of fathers and mothers buying happiness for a great army of little ones were his comrades in a blessed fellowship. It seemed that everybody on the good Lord's earth was engaged in the holy work of bringing joy to those who were most beloved. As the possibilities of his three dollars expanded his heart outgrew them, and its wounds were healed with the balm of Gilead. He no longer begrudged the twenty dollars that he had given for an ulster for the old fanatic father-in-law.

"He's not such a bad lot after all," he thought, as he looked over a menagerie of lilliputian animals, fuzzy and frail. "If he lived here, Nell and I would invite him to dinner. A fellow ought to get all his folks together at Christmas time."



He purchased some popcorn balls decorated with tinsel, a stocking full of candy, a tiny Russian poodle, an elephant, some little fuzzy chickens, two packages of cracker-jack and a box at the end of a string that made an infernal racket when you whirled it. These things cost him, all told, ninety cents and made a brave showing. He chuckled as he looked at them and thought of the pleasure they would bring to the little folks.

He took them home very secretly, slipping into the house with them, and arranged them on his bureau.

"Won't they show up on the Christmas tree, though?" he laughed. "You'd think there was ten dollars' worth of stuff there."

Every evening he arranged them in groups, trying to decide how he should distribute them, but could come to no satisfactory conclusion. At last he resolved that he would get the mother to help him in this important matter.

"If I should give something to one little kid that he didn't care for, and the other wanted," he mused, "I'd make one feel bad, and I shouldn't be doing the other any good. I wish I had a kid of my own; then I'd know more about such things."

Sometimes the toys reminded him that his own

home was childless, and then a sense of intolerable loneliness came over him.

Finding something that seemed appropriate for the older persons was not so easy, and he wandered for many hours through the stores before he finally came to a decision. For grandpa Roth he at last selected a briar pipe, for which he paid fifty cents; and for Mr. and Mrs. Roth he purchased a join' gift—a decorated beer stein, bearing the legend:

*"Alte Thaler, junge Weiber  
Sind die besten Zeitvertreiber."*

One dollar and ten cents he paid for the stein; and he was now confronted with the problem of buying with fifty cents a gift for a young lady. He was nearly reduced to despair, when a large assortment of showy articles marked "Sterling Silver" chanced to catch his eye. To his surprise, he found the attached prices remarkably low, and Miss Evalina became the prospective owner of a paper-knife with a silver handle. He could not remember that the young lady ever read anything, but many Christmas presents are bought that are of little use to their recipients. It is the good will which goes with them that is the most precious thing in the world.

Harry went to the flat above after dinner on Christmas Eve and waited impatiently for the children to go to bed. Fritz was old enough now to understand that there was something in the air, and he refused point blank to retire when eight o'clock, his customary hour, struck.

"Old Santa Claus won't come near the house if he happens to peek in and find you up yet," remonstrated his mother. "He only brings things to good boys."

"I don't care," pouted Fritz, edging behind a big chair into a corner.

"I believe he suspects something," whispered Mrs. Roth to Harry.

"He's on to us, I'll bet a hat," assented Harry.

"Fritz," said his father sternly, "you go right to bed, or I'll—" but his wife put her arm over his shoulder and murmured, "Don't scold the boy, *Liebchen*; 'tis Christmas Eve;" and he kissed her, saying, "And the dear Christ child comes into our hearts to-night, eh?"

"Let's pay no attention to him, and he'll get sleepy," suggested the mother; and Roth, sitting down at the piano, sang, "Just a Song at Twilight." They all kept their eyes furtively fixed on the little fellow, who wandered about the room for a few mo-

ments, and two or three times stopped to look up the shallow grate meant for hard coal.

"Get on to him," whispered Harry, poking grandpa Roth with his elbow.

Oh, poor little modern children! peeping into gas and coal grates and wondering early, so early in your lives, how Santa Claus manages it. Your fathers and grandfathers hung their stockings a-row above a spacious fireplace, through which fancy drove her reindeer teams for many and many a happy year. God keep us all, His children, from being disillusionized too early and too much!

Grandpa Roth played softly a German lullaby, and Fritz, standing by his mother's side, laid his flaxen head in her lap and went to sleep.

She picked him up, big boy that he had grown to be, with long limp legs dangling nearly to the floor, and carried him off to bed.

"Didn't I told you so?" asked the old man triumphantly, turning quickly upon the piano stool and shaking his forefinger at the closed door. "Music—ah, the strong power of music!"

Harry went down and got his presents, and Roth brought in the Christmas tree from the store-room down in the basement.

"Let's set it in the window," suggested Harry, pouring his gifts upon a sofa. "It'll look fine from

the street. Lots o' times, when I didn't have any home of my own, I've wandered around on Christmas looking at the trees in the windows. It did me good to know that other folks were having them, even if I wasn't."

"All right," said Roth, bringing a small table, from which he had removed a large fancy lamp. "In the window it shall be."

But his wife touched him on the arm, and said with tears in her soft voice:

"*Nein, mein Schatz.* Think of the little children who have no Christmas trees. They might see it and feel bad."

So they put it up in the middle of the front parlor, and hung it with glass balls and with wax angels, and they filled its green branches with tiny candles. Wonderful indeed was the fruit which began to grow upon that tree, fruit sown in the soil of love and watered with the tears of joy:—for Fritz, a wagon, a tin sword, a whistle and a spring gun; and for Bismarck Goethe, a jack-in-a-box, a big colored ball and a box of wooden soldiers. Harry's contributions made a brave showing, and it was with no little pride that he tied them on the tree. Once, hearing a slight noise, as he thought, he tiptoed to the bedroom door, opened it softly and peeped in.

"Sh—all sleeping as tight as mice," he explained in a stage whisper as he returned. "I thought that young rascal was rubbering."

Harry had tied his gifts for the older people up in neat packages and written their names on them. They pretended not to see him as he hung up the little bundles.

A rocking-horse and two or three paper boxes, too large to be suspended from branches, were set on the floor by the legs of the table. Then they lit the candles, and went back to the bedroom door to observe the effect from there. Old grandpa Roth pronounced it "*wunderschön*," and father Roth cradled his wife's chin in his big pink hand, saying, "Won't that make the little ones to be happy, eh?"

"What time do the little fellers wake up in the morning?" asked Harry, as he took his leave for the night.

"They'll wake up pretty early to-morrow," laughed Mrs. Roth.

"Don't you forget to call me," he admonished earnestly; "I wouldn't miss it for a house and lot. And say, don't you let them out of the bedroom till I come up."

They promised him, and he returned to his lonely home. He did not get to sleep until a late hour,

as Bridget was holding a *soirée* in the kitchen. One of her guests had brought a harmonica, and another a concertina.

He awoke early, nevertheless, in time to hear the milkman go by on the walk below, with a rattling of cans astonishing when one takes into consideration his implements of noise. Mrs. Roth jumped out of bed and ran to the back of the house with the one-time stolen bottle in her mind.

"That'll wake 'em," cried Harry; and he was right, for in a very short time Roth came downstairs and knocked at his door.

"You must excuse our appearance," he said, as he led the way up the dark stairs. "My wife has had no time her toilet to make. You shall help me to light the candles," he announced, as they entered the parlor.

Soon the wonderful tree was casting its soft radiance over the dim room, for the curtains were drawn, and the happy father knocked at the bedroom door. There was a shout from within, and Fritz broke forth and ran half-way to the tree in his flannel pajamas, then stopped, his hands clasped, his mouth open, gazing in wonder. Mrs. Roth came next, somewhat disheveled, attired in a morning wrapper. She was carrying Bismarck Goethe in her arms. He gasped several times, and

his eyes shone so they could be seen in the dark. Unable at first to speak, he gave vent to his emotion by repeating, "Ts, ts, ts," pointing with chubby fingers. At last he shouted, "Santa Claus didn't beget. Mama, Santa Claus didn't beget!"

Grandpa Roth distributed the gifts, reading the names in a loud voice, with the aid of an enormous pair of old-fashioned spectacles. Bismarck Goethe interrupted frequently, shouting, "Oh, see the sickens, see the sickens," for Harry's toy chickens had taken his eye. Soon Fritz was riding the wooden horse furiously, and his brother was seated on the floor pulling the soldiers out of their box.

"Mr. Henry Chapin," called the old man, lifting a large package from the table.

"That's my name," replied Harry; "but see here, now; this is too much—I—I—"

"Mr. and Mrs. Victor Roth!" proceeded the old man, playfully shouting him down. Harry opened his bundle, and found therein a gaudy smoking jacket made and embroidered by Mrs. Roth's own hands.

"This shall be a loafing cup," said Roth, standing with his arm about his wife and holding up the beer-mug, "and you shall with us to-day dine, and we shall all drink from it German champagne."

There was a knock at the door.



"Maybe it's Santa Claus," cried Fritz, for the moment freed of all doubt.

It was Harry's servant.

"The missus said I wuz to give ye this on Christmas mornin'," she announced, handing Harry a little package.

"It's a present from your wife," chorused Mr. and Mrs. Roth; "now the day is complete." Harry received a flat package, tied with a pink ribbon, and marked:

"For my dear husband."

He opened it and found one of Maeterlinck's plays, done into English.

## CHAPTER XXI

### ANOTHER CALCULATION

Not long after Nellie's return, she consented to go sleigh-riding with the Magnate, behind his new team of blacks. To do her justice, she accepted the invitation with some little misgivings as to the propriety, and even consulted her husband on the matter. Harry felt flattered, and told her to go along and enjoy herself. He had no fears as to Murchison anyhow, as his estimate of the Magnate's character was derived from Roth's frequent expressions of admiration and gratitude. The splendid blacks caused a great stir in the neighborhood as they were driven up to the door with a merry jingling of golden bells that ended in a sudden melodious crash as the horses were brought to a stop. More than one gossip's face was pressed to a window pane.

Nellie was at the window ready, and she came tripping down the stairs, veiled, and wearing a long automobile coat, with a fur collar about her

neck. Murchison threw back the lap-robe, she stepped in; and they were off with an unexpected leap of the powerful team, which soon settled down to a grand stride that made the fine snow smoke about the cutter runners. The bells were chiming now with a rhythmic cadence, and the silver-mounted harness danced on the sleek, firm backs of the glorious animals.

"I bought 'em of Jerry Fiske," explained Murchison as they flew down the Lake Shore Drive. "Do you know Jerry?"

"I—I have heard of him," prevaricated Nellie, "but I do not know him personally."

"Board of Trade man—what they call an eighth chaser—deals in fractions, you know, half, quarter, three-eighths, even money. I knew Jerry when he hadn't a cent. Came here from Kansas City, and asked me for a job. I didn't give it to him. Now he owns a fine stable of horses and a house on the Lake Shore Drive."

"How interesting!" gasped Nellie. The horses were going so fast that she could scarcely get her breath.

"Tom Collins," observed Murchison; "do you know Tom?"

"No, I never heard of him," replied Nellie truthfully.

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"His father was an old-timer: made a million in lumber, and built that big house just before you come to the turn in the road up here. I'll show it to you. Tom says that the white stocking on the off horse's right hind-foot would be an eyesore to him. He says that if it wasn't for that they would be the most perfectly matched team he ever saw."

Nellie leaned over the dashboard and looked.

"I don't see any stocking," she said.

"There it is," explained Murchison, laughing and pointing with his whip. "I mean that bit of white color on the hock. Steady, boys; steady. Steady, you rascals."

The nervous, high-strung animals, seeing the motion of the whip, leaped forward with tremendous bounds, and the light cutter tipped upon one runner as it took the corner at the end of this part of the drive.

"I met Tom the first time I was out with them," continued the Magnate, still sawing on the reins. "He was coming down the drive with his automobile; and the rascals whirled square around with me and ran for three miles before I could get them under control again. Lucky I had them in the cutter and not the carriage."

Nellie did not feel afraid. There was some-

thing in this forceful man's absolute confidence in himself that left no doubt of his ability to manage a team of horses. He was evidently used to having his own way. They passed bumping over some street-car tracks, and raced through a region of wooden homes more or less pretentious and displaying a medley of many and mixed styles of architecture. In every vacant lot there were from one to three "For Sale" signs, bearing the names of prominent real estate dealers and many of them announcing that easy terms would be given or that money would be loaned for building. Soon they had the Lake again on their right and a long row of palaces on their left. Nellie looked admiringly at these, and her companion told her the names of their owners. Some were square and solid-looking, with porches supported by severely simple pillars; some were constructed of rough brown stones whose size and irregularity were suggestive of a study of Mycenæan architecture; others were made of white glazed bricks; and still others were of pressed brownstone in front while the remaining portions were of cheap, common brick. There was no unity or harmony in the general effect, such as one sees in the show streets of foreign cities whose people are of artistic temperament. The whole drive testified to the independence of the

great American mind, and to the power of money gained and spent before the finer perceptions have had time to develop. If there was any consensus of opinion indicated anywhere, any expression of a national spirit, it lay in the prevalence of towers and turrets. But these did not contribute in the least to harmony of effect, for they were of many different designs, and were attached to structures to which they seemed to have been glued on as an afterthought.

Murchison explained to Nellie how the owners of these expensive dwellings had made their money, and it all seemed so easy. As the palaces slid by, she heard the whole history of years of struggle, phenomenal luck, Aladdin-like success, wolf-like rapacity, dismissed in a few seconds. This had been mines, that speculation, this pork, that railroads, this contracts, that real estate. The residence of the "eighth-chaser" was as fine as any. Nellie mentally computed that there were eight-eighths to a dollar, and she wondered how many of them a man would need to chase and capture before he could live in such a house as that. Harry, she reflected, must be very stupid to remain so poor when he could acquire unlimited wealth by the simple process of chasing eighths.

The horses were now swinging along at a steady

gait, curving their necks and bodies gracefully as they shied frequently to the right or the left. At the rough places in the road the cutter bounded and came down again with a sliding jolt. The motion was most exhilarating, and Nellie began to feel ravenously hungry. When they came at last to a roadhouse several miles out, Murchison proposed that they stop for refreshments, and she assented without demur.

They took seats at a table in a large but well-warmed room, the only other occupants of which were two women in sealskins, drinking cocktails.

This sight was rather a shock to Nellie, whose puritan instincts immediately bristled, and she looked apprehensively about. The size of the room and its publicity, however, reassured her. Murchison, after much discussion with the waiter, ordered munificently. He was indignant that there were no prairie chickens, but consoled himself with the reflection that three-quarters of an hour would have been required to get them ready. There was champagne on the ice, which was brought on immediately, with the "little-necks."

"Of course," apologized the Magnate, after giving minute directions as to the chicken salad, "we could not hope to get anything but an informal lunch at this time of the day."

"Do you see much of Mrs. Kimball-Smith," asked Nellie, tasting her champagne daintily.

Murchison laughed, familiarly and caressingly sipping the keen liquid from under his gray mustache.

"I haven't looked her up," he replied. "I had forgotten all about her. She isn't my style at all. I like a more intelligent sort of woman; and when they combine beauty with intelligence"—here he fixed his shrewd eyes upon those of his companion boldly and admiringly—"I find myself entirely *hors de combat*."

"Do you speak French, Mr. Murchison?" inquired Nellie eagerly.

"Oh, yes, a little. I am in Paris frequently. We—ah—we are thinking of doing business over there."

"Oh, how delightful! I am studying French, and I speak it very well. My accent, my teacher says, is particularly good. Usually Americans can not master the true Parisian accent. French, as spoken by foreigners, is a sort of Volapük. You can get along with it in any part of the world. Even the French themselves can understand it, though, of course, it's not proper French at all."

"You ought to travel," observed the Magnate. "A cultured woman like you needs only one thing



to make her perfect, so far as education is concerned. Do you know, I fancy you must lead a sort of lonely life. Your husband is gone, of course, all day, and he is interested in his business. Why, I don't believe you even have companionship of your own—ah—mental stature. Those club women are none of them as bright as you are!"

"Now don't flatter." But she was secretly gratified; for the opinion confirmed an idea of Nellie's, long nurtured, that she had outgrown the little hero-worshiping circle to which she belonged, and that it was time for her to join one of the powerful woman's clubs that were actually doing things—one of those she saw mentioned in the papers as discussing such questions as, "What shall we do with our aged?" "How shall we clean our streets?" "Are men naturally carnivorous?"

"Take some more champagne," urged the Magnate, attempting to replenish Nellie's glass, from which she had sipped the least possible amount.

"Oh, my, no!" she cried, pulling her glass away and covering it with her hand. "Why, my people are all temperance. What would the folks out home think of me if they saw me drinking wine? It's dreadfully wicked, but I'm going to taste a little of it, just for a lark."

"It will do you good," insisted the Magnate.

"No? Not a drop more?" He was disappointed that she did not take kindly to the champagne.

"I often think of you," he continued tenderly. "Do you know, frankly, you are a magnificent woman, fit to grace a palace. You ought to be moving in the very best social circles. You should have married a millionaire. It would be some satisfaction to buy clothes for a woman like you. By God, you'd look superb in full evening dress, brought from Paris, with ropes of pearls or diamonds, or something of that sort, about your neck! Take some more champagne, Mrs. Chapin; it's perfectly innocent."

"You—you mustn't use such language," gasped Nellie, strangely excited and carried away, despite herself, by her companion's eloquence, and the picture of herself in a Paris gown, bedecked with diamonds and moving with the stately step which she so well knew, beneath the brilliance of electric chandeliers. Her cheeks flushed, and her eyes glistened.

"I beg your pardon," said the Magnate, "but I can't control myself when I think of our society women, and know that such a splendid creature as you must be relegated to obscurity. Why, you'd be the rage! Your intelligence, culture, and wit,

too, fit you for moving in the highest circles. Now pardon me, but I'm so interested in you—take some more champagne—no? I don't believe that you have any companions of your own grade. Do you? I can change all that, if you'll put yourself under my patronage."

"Oh, yes," replied Nellie, stiffening slightly; "we know—"

"Now pray don't be offended. I wouldn't offend you for the world. Please take this in the spirit in which it is intended."

"Oh, I do; I do. But really we know some of the best people in the city. Senator Joseph Chapin is my husband's uncle, and he calls on us when he comes to town. Why, we dine nearly every Sunday at the Crisseys'. Alderman Crissey, you know. He is one of our most famous lawyers. My husband and he were school-fellows together. Do you know Mr. Crissey, Mr. Murchison?"

The Magnate smiled in a sardonic way. "Yes, I know him," he replied dryly.

"Don't you think he's a handsome man? All the women of the club are just wild over him. He looked so noble when he was lecturing to us the other night."

"Here are the clams," observed the Magnate.

"Waiter, where's the tabasco sauce? Eh?" he asked with a suggestion of a sneer, "are you also wild over this paragon?"

Nellie, with a woman's quick instinct in such matters, divined that Murchison did not like Crissey. She thought that the Magnate was jealous, and she could not resist indulging in a little of woman's natural sport.

"I think Mr. Crissey is a very handsome man," she replied, looking down. "So distinguished looking."

"Umph, yes, very distinguished for a shyster lawyer. And I suppose he reciprocates the admiration—has told you in his pompous way that you are beautiful?" he asked brutally, spitefully spearing a clam.

Nellie enjoyed this immensely.

"Oh, Mr. Crissey isn't at all pompous in such matters," she replied equivocally, actually blushing at the prevarication.

The Magnate's shrewd gray eyes contracted with hate. A slight pallor crept over his face at the thought that this man had again crossed his path, and he was silent for some time.

But at last a happy thought struck him, and his cheeks flushed with excitement. "I'll plow with this heifer," he said to himself contemptuously.

"Here's the salad at last," he cried cheerfully. "Let me help you. There, that's a square deal."

"Oh, you've given me more than half."

"No, just even Steven. Now let me fill your wine glass—just another sip with the salad. It's as innocent as cider."

The two women in sealskins passed out, looking boldly and curiously at the Magnate and his companion. They were matrons and stout. Their faces were flushed, and one of them staggered a little. As they disappeared through the door their voices were heard unnaturally loud. Nellie shuddered and determined not to drink another drop.

"How would you like to work for my company?" suddenly asked Murchison, leaning back in his chair and regarding Nellie frankly.

"Work for your company?" she asked in much wonderment.

"Certainly. Big pay, easy work. A sort of confidential agent, you know. We need some one like you. Every big company has such a woman in its employ, when it can find one."

"What could I do?"

She was piqued, for the proposition suggested type-writing or something of that nature.

"Will you regard this talk as confidential?"

"Why certainly, if you wish it."

"I do wish it, for it is necessary for me to expose to you some of the inmost secrets of our way of doing business; and you may accept or not, as you please. Though to tell you the truth, there is scarcely a society woman in town who wouldn't jump at what I am going to propose to you."

"I'll never breathe a word to any one," promised Nellie, whose curiosity was now thoroughly aroused.

"Well, did you ever hear of a lobbyist?"

"Ye-es, though I don't know exactly what they do. Is it quite respectable?"

"Respectable? Why, in Europe and at Washington it's the sort of thing that princesses do."

"But I'm no princess, Mr. Murchison."

"No, you're a queen, and wittier and more beautiful than any princess I ever saw. Let me put a little more vinegar on your salad; it's sort of tasteless. There, see if that doesn't improve it. Now let me explain what your first commission would be. You can begin right here. We are trying to get an extension of our telephone franchise—I'm interested in the telephone company, you know. It rests with the board of aldermen to grant us this. Now this man Crissey hates me, and keeps voting against us for that reason. It's

a purely personal matter between him and me. What I want you to do is to get him to vote for us. If you succeed you'll be doing him a good turn as well as us. We want to get on a sound basis that will let us know where we are. Then we'll feel like putting more money into the business and can give the people better service and cheaper rates. If we can get this extension, we can make a five cent tariff for all public telephones immediately. To vote for this ordinance will be doing a public service, and will make Crissey himself more popular and will help him along politically. Do you follow me?"

"Yes," answered Nellie. "But how I could make him vote any way? He's a man with a mind of his own."

"Oh, you know!" laughed Murchison. "Women have ways of getting things—especially when they are as handsome as you are—and when the man in question knows that they are handsome."

Nellie's face suddenly flamed.

"I think I had better be going now," she said huskily.

"No, no; sit down a moment. You don't have to compromise yourself in any way. A shrewd woman like you knows how to be sweet and to get a man to do anything she asks without actually

compromising herself or even tarnishing her reputation. Just get Crissey to be a little sweet on you, and he'll do anything you want, for—for hopes. The hopes needn't materialize, you know," he laughed. "What would you rather have than anything else in the world? Just name your price, and I'll see that you get it. Let me see; what would you say to a trip to Europe for a year, all expenses paid—a liberal allowance? We were saying a while ago that that's just what you need to complete your education. You could live for six months in Paris. You'd speak French like a native when you returned."

The thought of Dare swooped down upon Nellie, and she remembered that he was going away in the spring. She grew faint for a moment with a superhuman longing, and the bare room with its wooden tables vanished from her consciousness; in their places she saw the Bay of Naples, the fishing villages where a man might paint and dream for a life-time, and the purple islands of Capri and Ischia. She heard again the words:

"And we must not forget old Vesuvius, lifting its huge black tree of smoke against the sky by day, and its eternal torch by night. And at night, if we were sitting there together, you and I, on our balcony, we should see a festival, a carnival of



lights, the street lamps, running in parallel rows, the lanterns flitting about on the bay, the groups and lines of lights where the fishing villages are—"

Harry was so slangy and cared so little for the higher life! Besides, she would not do anything really bad. She would leave him his whole salary to enjoy himself with in his own way, and would come back to him at the end of the year.

"Do you think I could do it?" she faltered. "Do you really think I am smart enough?"

"Do it? The easiest in the world! Do it; and benefit everybody, and not hurt yourself."

"Will you give me full directions as to the best way?"

"We'll talk it all over together before you begin. I'll study on it to-night, and we'll hold a conference in my office to-morrow. We'll help you in every way we can, in this and all other commissions that you may undertake for us."

When they drove home, the shadows of the early winter night had already fallen over the city, and the electric lights were shining on the snow with a white and dazzling brilliancy. Sparks sputtered beneath the wheels of the trolley-cars like phosphorus around the prow of a moving ship, and the overhead wires twinkled with a line of evanescent stars.

Murchison delighted a church committee the next

morning by replying to their begging letter with a hundred-dollar check, thereby confirming the impression that his private charities gave the lie to all rumors derogatory to his reputation. And he chuckled as he told his lawyer that he had at last got Crissey on the run. "I've found his weak spot," he laughed. "I've got him mixed up with a woman, and it'll develop into a scandal, sure, if he don't listen to reason."

## CHAPTER XXII

### A RIFT WITHIN THE LUTE

"Are the Chapins coming to dinner every Sunday all the rest of our lives?" asked Dolly Crissey. There was a petulant note in her voice, and she did not fix her eyes on her husband with that level, fearless glance so characteristic of her. She felt spiteful, and she was ashamed of herself for feeling so. She would not admit that there was a suspicion in her mind regarding her husband, for she had no just cause for suspicion. Besides, her own mind was so ingenuous and innocent that she had the greatest scorn of anything that smacked of deceit. That she was annoyed, and did not care to tell her husband why, made her all the more uncomfortable. She was tired, moreover, and, like all tired women, she imagined herself unattractive.

A woman, like a cat, needs a certain amount of stroking to make her purr. Rub her persistently the wrong way, with never so good intentions, and the nervous electricity in her accumulates, and she becomes spiteful.

"Why, no, my dear," laughed Crissey, "though they have been here a good deal lately, haven't they?"

"Yes; you seem to derive great pleasure from their society. Oh, I'm so tired to-night that my legs will hardly hold me up. The children have been perfect little demons all day." And she sank into a chair with a sigh. The tiny blotch of white hair fell down before her eyes, and she pulled it out straight and looked at it, wrinkling her forehead that she might the better raise her lids.

"I'm getting gray as a rat," she observed. "If I were red-headed, now, like Mrs. Chapin—how is that, Edward; do red-headed persons grow gray early?"

Crissey turned sharply about from the mirror and looked at her. He was dressing for a dinner at the Fellow-craft Club, one of those stag organizations that dine ever so often and are entertained by their guests, actors and others who can be induced to tell a story or sing a song in return for dinner.

Crissey had accepted this invitation because he was seeking every legitimate opportunity to extend his popularity.

"You're all out of sorts to-night, Dolly," he said, kindly. "If I hadn't positively promised to respond

to a toast I wouldn't go and leave you alone. What is the matter, little woman? Don't you feel well?"

"Oh, don't stop at home on my account," she replied. "I never see you any more anyway, and one evening more or less won't make any difference."

"This isn't like you, Dolly," said Crissey, arranging his black necktie. "You must be kind of run down and nervous. Don't you think you need a tonic?"

"I guess I'm just bored, that's all. But don't mind about me."

Crissey struggled into his dinner coat.

"I'm a guilty wretch," he admitted, "and I do neglect you. But it's as much for your sake and that of the children as for my own. Half the time I'd rather be at home here with you and the little ones, but politics is a jealous mistress. I'm going to Congress next fall, sure thing, Dolly, and you are going with me. Am I all right?" he laughed, leaning with his back against the bureau, his hands upon it. "Black tie, gold studs, everything? Hadn't we better get out the theater program again?"

She sighed. He was certainly the handsomest man in all the world, and she felt old and ugly.

"What did that Chapin woman want of you last

Sunday," she asked, "tittering and giggling there in the library so long?"

"Want of me? Why, nothing, I guess. She always wants to talk about books. Why didn't you come in? I wish you wouldn't let her corner me and then bore me by enthusing about books which she knows nothing about."

"You didn't look very weary when I saw you; you were sitting there together like two birds in a nest, both deeply absorbed, I assure you."

"Why, Dolly, this is positively preposterous. If you are jealous, now, it will be for the first time in our married life, and over the least likely person in the whole world."

"Why did she titter so then and look at you so languishingly?"

"Come to think of it, the woman did act queer," admitted Crissey. "But she's just a silly woman, you know."

"She's in love with you, that's what's the matter," said Dolly on the verge of tears. "Why, Mrs. Mallock was telling me yesterday about the Cramers. That deceitful little cat, Eva Sutherland, Mrs. Cramer's most intimate friend, came into her house and took away her husband under her very nose. Edward," and rising she looked at him

solemnly, "if any woman did that to me, I'd kill her!"

"By Jove, I believe you would," said Crissey, regarding her admiringly. "I shouldn't wonder if Jim got his fighting qualities from you after all. But you're setting up a straw woman, Dolly. Pshaw! It's too foolish to think about. I couldn't afford to get mixed up with any woman just now, even if I wanted to. Wait till you are strutting about the streets of Washington on the arm of Congressman Crissey, and you'll wonder how you could have been such a little goose."

"She's such a handsome woman, and you and she make such a fine couple together," pouted Dolly.

"Pshaw! She'll never get a chance to look any way with me. You mustn't distract me this way, little woman. I invite the Chapins because I like Harry. He's not brilliant like his unc'e, the senator, but he's true blue, the best-hearted fellow in the world. He went to school with me in the country when we were boys. I'm sorry for him, too. He made a mistake in marrying that silly, selfish woman, and I've fancied of late that he didn't seem quite happy. But if you are sure that you have noticed anything queer in—"

"You're the best fellow in the world," cried

Dolly impulsively, pacified as much by the contemptuous epithets applied to Mrs. Chapin as by the explanation. "I'm a little out of sorts, I guess. But you know, yourself, that I never see you any more."

"We'll have an evening all to ourselves this very week," promised the alderman. "We'll go to the theater—I'll see about the tickets the first thing to-morrow. By Jove!" looking at his watch, "do you know what time it is?" And stepping to the hall he took down his hat and coat from the nail. "I'll be late." Then, coming back for a moment, with the idea of cheering up his wife:

"This reminds me of a story that I read some time ago in one of the comic papers," he laughed, "about a little boy who asked his mother who the strange man was that spanked him. It was his father, don't you see? He came home so seldom during the daytime that—"

Dolly smiled, sadly.

"Oh, you needn't furnish a diagram. I understand it without the least explanation. It doesn't seem at all funny to me."

Crissey kissed her. "Brace up, little woman. Don't cry over imaginary troubles."

She followed him to the door and called after him:



"Look in a glass before you go in, and see that your necktie isn't twisted around under your ear."

As she turned back into the house, she heard the shrill voices of Dorothy and Agnes Matilda from the bedroom, as though quarreling.

"My goodness," she exclaimed; "there's the children waked up!" and she ran in to them.

Dorothy was sitting up in bed in her little white "nighty," and she fairly shrieked as soon as she saw her mother:

"Isn't to-day to-morrow, mama?" and Agnes, annoyed at being disturbed, was mocking her by repeating, "Isn't it, 'tisn't it?"

Mrs. Crissey sat on the edge of the bed and said, tenderly: "Lie down like a good girl and go to sleep, and when you wake up in the morning it will be to-morrow."

She well knew that in the morning the little one would ask as soon as she was fairly awake, "Is it to-morrow yet, mama?" for her small mind had been pursuing this difficult question for about a week now; but she saw no better way than to put the child off from day to day, till the truth dawned upon her.

"Will you sleep with me, mama? Will you sleep with me?"

"Yes, if you go right to sleep. I did put you to sleep once."

The baby snuggled down beside her sister and lay perfectly quiet for twenty minutes. Just as Mrs. Crissey was thinking of rising and stealing from the room, a small voice asked in perfect wakefulness:

"How time it is? Seben o'clock?"

## CHAPTER XXIII

### PRIMITIVE METHODS

Kickham Gorham, the tall, stoop-shouldered, blond young man who had read law with Crissey for many years, and who of late had been practising in the justice courts, was at last admitted into partnership. On the outer windows of the offices were inscribed the letters, "Crissey and Gorham, Attorneys at Law," and the young man was in the habit of walking slowly past on the other side of the street that he might read the sign, high up, and enjoy the visible evidence of his triumph. On the door opening into the main hall one read the names:

EDWARD CRISSEY  
KICKHAM GORHAM  
ATTORNEYS AND COUNSELLORS  
AT LAW.

If you opened this, an anemic young man with tousled hair looked up from a typewriter and asked whom you wished to see. Here was the

general reception-room, whose only other furnishing consisted of a metal water-tank marked, "Waukesha," a cane-bottom chair, and a bench along the wall.

Offices had been walled off by means of an opaque glass screen rising half-way to the ceiling. The first and most accessible of these was occupied by Mr. Kickham Gorham, the second by Mr. Edward Crissey.

One evening about a week after the dinner at the Fellow-craft Club, Crissey was sitting in his office, much mystified. He had received a letter from Mrs. Chapin, asking him to give her an appointment at eight o'clock in the evening, as she wished to talk with him on important matters. His first impulse had been to ignore the request, as he could not think of any possible business which she could have with him. A chance thought caused him to reconsider the decision.

"Trouble with her husband," he mused, as he thumbed the pages of an important case. "She's tired of slow-going, prosaic old Harry, and wants to get a divorce. Perhaps some rich man has turned her head. Huh! he's worth a dozen of her. I'll give her a talking to that will do her good."

He was smoking a cigar and reading his notes

by an electric bulb with a green tin cover, when Nellie opened the door and entered.

"Good evening, Mr. Crissey," she faltered; and then she giggled timidly: "Why, how dark it is in here!"

"Good evening, Madam. I'll turn on the lights in the chandelier immediately," and he arose to suit the action to the word.

"No, no," said Nellie, laying her hand on his arm. "It's quite light enough to talk by, and I feel nervous coming all alone to a man's office. I—I never did such a thing before in my life. There might be somebody across the street that knew me. You never can tell when you'll be recognized in a city like this. I'm just sure that elevator man knew who I was."

"As you please, Madam," replied the lawyer, placing a chair near his desk. "Won't you be seated?"

Nellie took the proffered chair, and, removing the glove from her right hand, fumbled with the knot of her veil.

"Won't you untie my veil?" she asked after a moment, turning partly around and bending her neck. "It has got into such a hard knot."

"Does your veil interfere with conversation?"

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asked the lawyer dryly, not making the least move.

"Yes," she tittered. "It's wet, and it keeps getting into my mouth."

He arose, and leaning gallantly over her, with the hackneyed words, "Permit me, Madam," performed the desired service. His trained legal intellect, keen for detail, did not fail to note that the knot was very easy and yielded to the first touch of his clumsy fingers. He handed her the veil with a courteous bow and resumed his seat.

"How cleverly you did it," laughed Nellie. "You must be used to such things. Because you're a married man, I suppose!"

"Can it be possible?" reflected Crissey, glancing nervously at the cluster of electric bulbs above his head. "Is Dolly right, after all?"

The woman filled the room with a faint odor of heliotrope, and for a moment the strong man's heart beat faster, and a sudden dryness in his throat caused him to swallow two or three times. Nellie was leaning toward him, a fixed smile exposing her white teeth that gleamed in the dim light.

"Why don't you smoke?" she asked. "I do so enjoy the smell of tobacco. It makes a woman feel as though there were a man around," she added,

suddenly remembering a phrase that she had read somewhere.

Rising with a snap as though a spring had been released, Crissey took a match from the top of his desk and relighted his cigar. Nellie watched him closely as the light of the match fell on his strong, handsome face and white hair. Her eyelids were brought together till the reddish pupils peeped out through the merest slit—the same sort of a cat-like regard that she had once cast upon Harry, when she had him within striking distance. Crissey took a brisk turn up and down the office, puffing vigorously, and then sat down again, complete master of himself.

"What is your business with me, Madam?" he inquired brusquely, at the same time taking out his watch. "Please be brief. It is getting late, and I must be going home."

"Oh, how you frightened me!" cried Nellie in mock trepidation. "One would think you were a great big bear, when you growl like that!"

"I beg your pardon. I am very sorry if I frightened you. And now will you kindly state the nature of your business?"

"Will you promise not to growl again?"

Crissey smiled in spite of himself.

"On one condition, and that is that you have not come to me with any stories about my old friend Harry."

"Then I'm safe, for it isn't about Harry."

"Well, then?"

Nellie cleared her throat, slid a little nearer to the lawyer, till she was sitting on the very edge of her chair, and then mechanically straightened her hat. Crissey sat gravely looking at her, a respectful image of carven attention.

"Oh, dear, I don't know how to begin," she tittered. "You are so stern and forbidding; I am really afraid of you."

"Do you want me to lecture again before the club?"

"It's about the telephones," Nellie blurted out. She had expected to make a complete conquest of Crissey by this time. His self-control left her in a position of unexpected difficulty, and she was becoming so embarrassed that she scarcely knew what she was saying.

"About the telephones?"

"Yes. Do you know that, on account of your friendship for Harry, I am so interested in your career? You are so learned and eloquent and so striking looking. Do you know that Mrs. Kimball-Smith says that you are the most interesting



man that ever lectured before the club?" She accented the word "interesting" on the penult.

"Yes, but what about the telephones?" asked Crissey, feeling ill at ease.

Nellie was seized with a sudden inspiration.

"All the women of the club are so interested in your career, since you appeared before us. We don't want you to do anything to hurt it. We want you to be just as popular as you can be. Now you know what an awful telephone service we have in this city. If the company were granted an extension of—of—time, telephones would be cheaper. Couldn't you vote for it in the Council? It would make you so popular. Couldn't you, Mr. Crissey, just—just to please me?"

She laid her firm white hand on that of the lawyer resting upon his knee, and pressed it convulsively.

Crissey jerked his arm back, arose to his feet, and turned the light on full. Leaning over the woman, he looked her in the eye. She trembled violently under the clear, honest gaze. Her face flushed red as scarlet and then turned white.

"So that villain Murchison sent you?" he asked at length in a low tone.

Nellie sprang forward and, laying her hands on his shoulders, cried:

"I thought it was best for you! It is best for you! Please, please, do it for my sake!"

He seized her wrists, and, holding her from him, pushed her gently but firmly down into her chair.

"Mrs. Chapin," he said, gravely and almost tenderly, "your words can bear but one interpretation, but I refuse to understand you. You are a respectable married woman, the wife of the best man in the world—my friend. I perceive that you are in great danger, that you are in the clutches of one of the shrewdest and most unprincipled villains in the world. Go home to your husband, Mrs. Ch—Nellie. Learn to love him. Learn to love your home. Become a mother. No woman is half a woman until she becomes a mother. She can not fail to be true and good and virtuous after she has felt the touch of baby fingers upon her cheek—unless, indeed, she be a monstrosity, which you are not. Go home, Nellie, and pray to God to help you. You are not fitted for this thing that you are doing to-night. You did not do it well. I could see from your awkwardness, I can see from the tears that are now stealing into your eyes, that you are too good a woman for this kind of thing."

Nellie sat looking at him as if fascinated. When he spoke of her tears, she picked up her veil from

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Your words can bear but  
one interpretation



the desk and covered her face with it. Crissey took one of her hands in his.

"You are a good woman, Nellie," he said, "and it is the mission of good women to make the world better, to make men better, not worse. Now let us wipe this interview off the slate—forget it entirely, as though it had never happened. Don't despise your husband because he is not brilliant. He has as many noble qualities as any man I know. All the brilliancy in the world does not weigh heavier in the scales than a thoroughly good, true heart. Try to see—"

A noise in the adjoining office caused him to drop the hand and to glance quickly at the glass partition. Darting suddenly from the room, he threw open the door inscribed, "Mr. Kickhan Gorham," and surprised two men, one fat, with a red face, wearing a short light overcoat and a small derby; the other small, wearing a cheap ulster and a slouch hat.

"We, ah, just happened in," stammered one of them.

Crissey sprang forward, and, catching them both by the collar, knocked their heads together.

"Murder! Murder!" screamed the little man. The larger one, who was quite powerful, strug-

gled violently. Crissey let go of him, and struck him a blow full in the face that felled him to the floor.

"And now, my little man," he panted, choking the other until his eyes started from his head, "tell me who let you in here. Who was it, quick, or I'll break your neck."

"The—the janitor," wheezed the "private detective."

"The janitor, eh? Well, I'll help you out." And suiting the action to the word, he led him to the door and propelled the detective through it with a good, honest kick.

Turning to the larger man, who was just recovering, he pulled him roughly to his feet, and helped him through the door in the same primitive manner. Then he returned to his own office. Nellie was gone; but her green veil was lying on his desk, and the room was filled with a faint odor of heliotrope.

Crissey crushed the slight fabric into a tiny wad and threw it into the waste-paper basket.

"Poor Harry!" he muttered. "Poor old fellow!"

He stood for a full minute with his hands in his pockets in deep reflection, bringing his train of thought to a conclusion with a low whistle.

"Well, I reckon they won't make much capital out of that," he laughed, picking up his hat from the top of the desk.

## CHAPTER XXIV

### MISCHIEF IN A LETTER

Dolly Crissey was sewing a button on her husband's every-day business coat, with her little flock about her. It was evening, and by the light of the green-shaded lamp Jim was struggling with the first principles of algebra. Dorothy Second, who had developed a great talent for art, sat in her little red chair drawing pictures on a sheet of foolscap. She used the bottom of an ordinary kitchen chair for a table, and came running every moment to her mother to receive approbation for her latest effort.

Agnes, who was already becoming quite domestic, as is apt to be the case with little girls who have good, sensible mothers, sat in her rocker with her legs dangling, demurely hemming a table napkin. Imitative of her mother, she desired always to be doing the same thing or something similar. Her work was far from perfect; yet Mrs. Crissey had ever some kind word of encouragement to say, and rarely condemned outright.



"Ma," said Jim, running his fingers through his tousled, reddish hair, "I wish you had studied algebra when you were a girl, so that you could help me. I can't make any sense out of it at all."

"It'll do you more good to dig it out yourself, my son," she replied. "Stick to it, and it will come to you all at once. Your father had no one to help him when he was a boy, and see what a learned, brilliant man he is."

"But algebra is such rot," replied the boy. "Now here it says that  $x$  and  $y$  are unknown quantities, and that  $a$  and  $b$  are known quantities. That's a lie. They're all unknown to me!"

"James! You mustn't use such strong language, not even about your lessons. It doesn't sound nice. Just read it over carefully and quietly, and I'm sure you can understand it. Doesn't Tommy Spears understand the algebra sums?"

"Yes'm," grunted Jim.

"Well, there you are. You wouldn't want anybody to say that he is smarter than you."

Jim rested both elbows on the table, dug his fingers into his hair, and read the paper again with determined eyes and knotted brows.

All at once, and apropos of nothing, little Dorothy began to sing, in a high flat voice and with less

tune than time, which she marked by stabbing the paper with the point of her pencil:

*One dark night, when everybody wuz in bed,  
Mrs. O'Larry lit her lamp 'n the shed;  
Cow kicked it over and winked he's eye 'n' said,  
'There'll be a hot time in the ol' town ter-night,  
Mah baby—  
W'en you hear—'*

"Dorothy, Dorothy!" cried Jim. "Ma, can't you stop her? I can't learn anything if she's going to make such a racket."

The child continued the song, and Mrs. Crissey ran to her and put her hand over her mouth.

"Sh—" she said, laughing, "you mustn't make so much noise now. Jim wants to study."

"All the silderns at the kindergarten sings it," pleaded Dorothy, "and Uncle Harry says it's a bully song."

"Let mama see what you have made. Jim, you had better go into your father's library and prepare your lesson."

"It's mama coming home wiv her new hat on. That's the eye, that's the hair, that's the nose, them's armzes, them's fingers."

"But where's the other eye, sweetheart? Hasn't mama got two eyes?"

"Every peoples has two eyes," replied the little girl gravely. "She's other eye is on the other side."

"Who taught you that?"

"Uncle Harry."

"He's a wonderful man, isn't he? He teaches you to sing and to draw."

"I love him three bushels," said little Dorothy.

"And how much do you love mama?"

"Seben bushels."

"And papa?"

"Five bushels."

The mother caught the child to her breast and whispered to her: "You'll love papa more when you grow up to be a big girl. Mama loves him a million, million bushels."

"I love mama the bestest," declared Dorothy stoutly. "Will I be a big girl to-morrow, mama? Will I, mama?"

"Isn't Dorothy silly?" inquired Agnes disdainfully.

Just then a decorative clock on the mantel, shaped like the façade of a Greek temple, struck eight with a mellow chim.

"It's time little girls went to by-o-land," said the mother, setting the baby on her chair. "Agnes, dear, gather up your work."

"Yes, mama."

Mrs. Crissey took up the coat, which she had laid across the back of the rocker in which she had been sewing, and something white dropped from a pocket and fluttered to the floor.

She picked it up. It was a letter, and her quick eye detected the fact that the superscription on the envelope was in a woman's hand. Never before in her life had the temptation come to her to read surreptitiously one of her husband's letters. She glanced a second time sharply at this one and tucked it back into the pocket. She put the coat over her arm and started to hang it away, but before she reached the door she glanced guiltily at the children. Agnes was still fussing with her sewing, gathering up odds and ends and putting them into a little bag; and Dorothy Second was making one more picture. She slipped the letter from the pocket, and, turning her back to the little ones, took it from the envelope and read it. It said:

"Dear Mr. Crissey—Can you be in your office Wednesday evening at eight o'clock? I want to see you so much.

Yours sincerely,

"NELLIE CHAPIN."

"So!" whispered Dolly, clutching at her heart,

through which a sudden and intolerable pain had shot as though some cruel hand had seized and wrung it. Mechanically she put the letter back a second time, and sank, almost fainting, into a chair. She must have sat some minutes thus, staring with wide-open eyes and lips white, for she was at last awakened from her stunned condition by the voices of her daughters, quarreling over an apple.

"That's half, I tell you," Agnes was saying, and little Dorothy was whining:

"Oh, not so half, I told you; not so half."

She hastened from the room, turning her face away that the children might not see it, and called Lena, telling her hoarsely to put them to bed, as she was not feeling well.

Her first impulse on reaching her own room was to throw herself on the couch and sob. But she was too strong a character for that. Instead, she walked nervously to and fro, trying to think. Different emotions swayed her in turn. One moment it seemed as though this designing, wicked woman were making a systematic attack on her husband's affections. Then Dolly felt old and ugly and sorry for herself. She had no doubt of Nellie's ultimate victory, and covering her face with her hands, she sobbed hysterically. The next instant a feeling of rage swept over her; and, with clenched fists, writh-

ing lips, and deadly eyes, she became a little fury, with the dark shadow of murder looming in her bosom. Again, she thought of the silly manners of Nellie in the library, and the eyes which she had seen her make, and her jealous mind leaped at conviction; her husband had become entangled with this vile woman, and she was making him meet her wherever and whenever she pleased.

Ah, that explained why she had seen so little of him of late! Oh, God! And here she stopped suddenly and stared as though she beheld some horrid specter that had been dogging her all her life, invisible till now; or as though the mask had dropped from the face of a friend, exposing the obscene and fleshless lineaments of corruption: perhaps her husband had always been false to her! Then she thought of how she had worked for him through all his early years of struggle, and she sobbed aloud:

"I've been a good wife to you, Edward. You know I've been a good wife to you. I've grown old before my time for you."

Just then Lena knocked at the door.

"Please, ma'am, Dorothy's so bad. She won't say her prayers."

Mother-love, stronger than any other emotion in

the heart of a really good woman, arose all powerful.

"Tell her I'll come right down," called Dolly; and she muttered, as she washed her haggard face with cold water:

"My poor darlings. They must never suffer for this. They must never know of it."

Aggie, sitting up in bed in her white gown, with two tiny pigtails hanging down her back, began to explain volubly how naughty Dorothy was, the moment the mother entered the bedroom.

Dorothy, in flannel pajamas, was striding up and down the bed, bouncing on the springs as a circus athlete walks on the net into which he falls after an aerial feat. She was singing at the top of a very high pair of lungs: "Jesus loves me, Jesus loves me." The moment she saw her mother she shrieked, "Ho, mama! Oh, mama! Ain't you comin' to put me to sleep, mama? Ain't you, or not you?"

The mother pressed the child to her bosom and knelt by the side of the bed with her.

"Now I lay me down to sleep," she said.

There was something in her tone that instantly quelled the thoughtless exuberance of childhood, and a hushed, sweet voice piped out in the dim

light, fragrant of love and holiness and the pure breath of innocence:

*"Now I 'ay me down to s'leep,  
I prays the Lord my soul to keep;  
If I should die before I wake,  
I prays the Lord my soul to take."*

The last line was sung, with a careless accent upon the word "soul."

"God bless papa," suggested the mother, and the child continued volubly:

"God bless papa, God bless mama, God bless Jim, God bless uncle Harry, God bless Lena—God bless every peoples!"

"You forgot dear sister Aggie," whispered the mother.

"Aggie pulled my hair," pouted the child.

"Dorothy, say, 'God bless Aggie,' this very moment."

"God bless Aggie—there! Will you lie down wiv me, mama? Will you lie down wiv me?"

When the first frenzy of Dolly's jealousy had somewhat subsided, it occurred to her that perhaps she was making a mountain out of a molehill, and the thought filled her with a joy so keen that she laughed hysterically. But the feeling was only



pure

transient; and the steady pain and fear settled down upon her that this attractive, wicked woman was plotting against her happiness. Of the outcome of such a campaign, her modesty left little doubt. One thing she knew, that she was too proud and self-respecting to mention the matter to Edward. She would suffer in silence and watch—watch with that superhuman keenness which is the gift of jealous people.

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As the days went by she became more and more miserable, till it seemed as though she must cry out; but she kept to her resolve, and suffered in silence with a heroism of which no man that ever lived would have been capable. At last, it seemed as though she saw confirmation of her fears in her husband's most ordinary actions. If he dressed with particular care, or cleaned his teeth with more than usual thoroughness, she was sure that he was preparing to meet Nellie. If he refused onions or food cooked with them, the wretched woman thought of faithless kisses. Crissey was so very busy that he did not see.



## CHAPTER XXV

### ONE SORT OF POET

The Crisseys ceased to invite the Chapins to their house, and, as a consequence, Harry found himself more isolated than ever. Except for the dull routine of his business and occasional talks with Gehrke, whose matrimonial aspirations never quite materialized, he was compelled to fall back upon the simple and kind-hearted Roths for his only human intercourse. Fritz and Bismarck Goethe were a great comfort to him. Once, during Nellie's absence in the country, he even brought Bismarck Goethe down to sleep with him. The experiment caused him to lie awake all night, as the little fellow was an active sleeper. Harry was fairly black and blue in the morning from the sturdy kicks and punches received from the boy's hands and feet.

"You'd think he was a jumpin'-jack," he explained when he took him back to his mother, "and that somebody was under the bed yanking the string all night. And what beats me is that he seems rested."

Bismarck Goethe had a way, too, of drawing his feet up to his head and throwing himself bodily outside the covers. If Harry dozed off for a moment, he was sure to hear loud sneezing and to find his charge entirely uncovered and cold as a frog.

When the concert of the factory whistles was heard the little chap sat up straight as a ramrod and bright as a dollar and cried:

"Seben o'clock. Mans goes to work."

"I don't see how you can manage to live and do all your work," he said to Mrs. Roth, "without any sleep at all."

"Oh, I sleep all right," replied the mother, smiling sweetly and giving the boy a hug. "I keep him covered without waking up at all. I'm—I'm used to it."

Ah, the love in a good woman's heart blossoms into so many sweet uses and makes so many things possible!

Of one episode of the night Harry cautioned Bismarck Goethe not to tell his mother, and had received a faithful, solemn-eyed promise. Imagine Harry's dismay when the boy cried out as soon as he entered his home:

"Oh, mama, I fell down the cracker, and I promised uncle Harry not to tell!"

"He fell between the bed and the wall with a tre-

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mendous bump," explained Harry, "and I was frightened to death. I expected to hear you come a-running downstairs. As long as you didn't, I saw no reason for worrying you about it."

"Oh, it's not the first time," laughed the mother.

With Roth, Harry had little in common save the comradeship and mutual recognition of two good hearts. The German, in addition to his family and his music, was the fortunate possessor of a fad, and there is nothing like a fad to keep a man from growing stale. Postage stamps are better than dry-rot, and coins have saved many a soul from utter weariness.

Being a poet by nature, it was natural that the German should turn his attention to the cultivation of flowers. Back of the house he had fenced in a tiny patch of sand with a wire screen; and there, every spring, he wheeled barrows of soil from a distant hollow where the leaves collected and rotted. He found more pleasure in a deposit of thoroughly decayed fertilizer, where a neighbor's hen-house once stood, than a miner would have experienced in striking a rich pocket of gold. He told his wife about it mysteriously, and arose at four o'clock in the morning to secure the whole precious bed.

Harry tried to get interested in Roth's flowers,

but he could not even remember the names of them. The German had a wire frame set up in a sunny window in the dining room, whereon were a number of pots containing plants that actually bloomed in the most inclement weather. He talked with a will of Dutch bulbs, of cuttings, of transplantings; and Harry listened with the interest of one who hears a foreign language which he would like to understand but can not. He even took several tiny pots down to his own rooms containing cuttings or little green noses that were poking inquiringly into the world, but the plants always died, despite the German's minute directions and enthusiastic predictions as to their possibilities.

"This," said the German, one Sunday morning early in March, "is the poet's narcissus," and he ran one of the long, slender leaves affectionately between his finger and thumb.

"What poet?" asked Harry. "Have you given it away?"

Roth laughed. "The narcissus of ancient poetry. You know the legend? They say that a beautiful youth his image so much admired while looking in a fountain that he was at last changed into that flower."

"He was so stuck on himself that he just stood there and took root, eh? That's the kind of a chap

that fellow Dare is, who is downstairs talking with my wife. I believe he'd take root before a looking-glass, if he was standing out doors."

"Mr. Dare is a great artist," explained Roth. "Artists have some right to be vain."

"Oh, Dare's all right," hastily rejoined Harry, his good heart coming to the fore. "He always treats me all right; only I can't bear to hear him and my wife chinning together about books and art and French and one thing and another. They make me tired. I always get out."

"See how these little flowers are like stars," said Roth. "And there are many other blooms that are like stars shaped. I sometimes look out of my window at night, and think that the stars are blossoms of great plants growing in the sky. If I look close, I can see narcissus stems, and branching sprays of the Star-of-Bethlehem and the vines of the trailing clematis."

When Roth talked like this there was a far-away look in his blue eyes, and his face was flushed with eagerness.

"Oh, how can any one be unhappy in the world," he cried, "when love is to all free, and the blessed flowers, and the stars? These—do you know what these are?"

"Yes—no—I've forgot again. You tell me every time I come up."

"This is a hyacinth. Beautiful, beautiful thing! *Schön, schön!* And they grow in a wonderful variety of colors; dark red, rosy red, white, pink, lavender, blue. Ah, your Mister Dare should not be proud. There is no artist living who can colors mix like the good God who makes and paints the flowers. This arrangement of blossoms is called a spike."

"It looks more like a lamp-chimney cleaner," suggested Harry.

Roth laughed immoderately, and went to the kitchen door with the pot in his hand.

"See here, *Schatz*," he cried; "see here, *Liebchen*; Mr. Chapin says these would make good lamp-chimney cleaners. Ah, he is no poet—our Harry!"

"All these flowers," he continued, coming back and setting the pot tenderly again in its place in the frame, "are from bulbs. Do you know what a wonderful thing is a bulb? It looks like a potato or an onion, and can be sent to any part of the world. Yet in its little heart is stored a treasury of beauty, grace, perfume, and tenderness. See these Easter lilies—they slept in a homely bulb—all their fragrance, their holy promises, their memories of

the good Jesus, who in the beauty of the lilies came."

"A bulb is something like a seed, isn't it?" asked Harry.

"A seed, too, is a wonderful thing," assented the German.

Among Roth's other plants were a wandering jew that trailed floorward from the mouth of a beer bottle, a pot of pale pink begonias with yellow stamens, some English primroses of faint, exquisite fragrance, and two or three tiny clusters of violets.

"These are for my wife," he said. "I used to bring her the first violets of spring when I was to her making court. This one, it is ready; I will give it to her now."

Cutting the dainty stem of a single flower that seemed most perfect, he went into the kitchen, where the little woman was busy at the table with the sleeves rolled back from her plump arms, and held it before her with courtly grace, in fat, but not clumsy, fingers. She spoke not a word, but a blush suffused the slightly disfigured face, and a meaning look came into the hazel-shy, and tender eyes.

It was the first violet of spring; and they were young lovers again—always.



She held up her mouth for a kiss, and he put the flower into her soft, brown hair.

"Come out here," cried Roth to Harry, "and I'll show you what I shall with my garden make this spring."

From the back porch, the German explained to Harry how the little patch of ground would soon be beautiful with snowdrops and crocuses, and later with a bed of tulips, daffodils and hyacinths; and he ran through, counting them off on his fingers, the flowers that could be kept blooming in succession up till fall.

"Do you see that dead tree there in one corner?" he asked. "It has no roots. I set it there myself, and I shall make it to life come. I shall plant at the bottom some morning-glory seeds, and you shall see what a beautiful tree it will be before the winter comes again. And"—here he laughed mysteriously and whispered in Harry's ear—"there is one thing that you must not Mrs. Roth tell. I shall plant a sweet pea vine below this window, and shall a string run up here. And some day, when it has got well started, I shall tell her that it is coming up to see her, and that it is her Romeo. Oh, I shall make that I am very jealous. Did you ever see a vine climb a string?"

"Well, I know that they do go up, but I never noticed particularly how they do it."

"They reach out little hands," explained the German, "and come up like a boy climbing a rope at a picnic—'hand over hand.'"

"They almost seem to think, don't they?" asked Harry.

"Think?" cried Roti. "Think? They have souls!"

Fritz was seated on the floor with his tin soldiers drawn up in line. They were Spaniards, and he had planted a toy cannon at a considerable distance. Every second he cried "Bang!" and discharged a marble, causing vast damage in the ranks of the enemy.

Bismarck Goethe was busily engaged in taking articles from a tall soiled-clothes basket in the corner, loudly calling the name of each garment as he deposited it on the floor. As Harry re-entered the room, the boy asked his mother:

"Are you making tapiloca pudding, mama?"

"Come here, Bismarck," commanded his father. But the sturdy urchin replied:

"I got else to do," and continued his catalogue.

"Them's my drawrzes; that's papa's shirt; that's Fritz's nighty; them's mama's—"

"*Gott im Himmel!*" exclaimed the mother, blush-

ing furiously and making a dash for the boy. The father picked him up, laughing, and dropped him into the basket, shutting the cover down over his head.

"Come into the front room and hear my poem, that I made up myself," he said, taking Harry by the arm and leading him away.

"Do you write poetry?" asked Harry.

"When the springtime comes, I feel like it. But I do not know the English so well. However, I write better than I speak."

Fumbling in his pocket, he produced a piece of soiled, yellow paper, and read:

*"When springtime waves her wand  
O'er budding bush and tree,  
Mine heart grows young again  
And buds in poetry.*

*Green memories that grief  
And time can never wrong,  
They swell within my breast  
And blossom into song!"*

"That seems all right," said Harry.

"The thought is not so bad?" asked Roth anxiously.

Just then Bridget knocked at the door and announced that dinner was ready. Harry went down to eat his Sunday dinner with his wife and Dare.

## CHAPTER XXVI

### A LOTHARIO OF FIFTY

In the latter days of March, Gifford Dare, artist, esthete, and cynic, definitely made up his mind to leave town. For some time he had felt the old *Wanderlust* growing in him which seizes every man who is not tied down to a woman and babies. The whitecaps, far out in the Lake, as he stood in his study window and watched them dreamily, seemed to him fairy hands beckoning him away, away. The voice of the plashing waves, if he wandered down by the shore on a warm evening, whispered to him of Venice, of the South Sea Isles, of the housetops of Fez.

The girl with the red-gold hair was in all these dreams; and he continually thought of taking her away with him to the Mediterranean or the Pacific, and of living with her in tropic dishabille and lawless leisure amid palm groves or in an orient garden.

Yet in his heart of hearts he knew that this

course could not lead to happiness. He was a true esthete; and every lover of the beautiful has something like conscience, has a perception, at least, of the comeliness of honor and manliness. He felt that it was a cowardly and an ugly thing to steal another man's wife.

And so he meant to go away and forget Nellie; and he finally fixed upon Venice. For this city most appealed to him, and the Venetian sketches which he had painted there long ago had been the beginning of his career.

The more he thought of Venice, the more disgusting the inland city climate and background became to him. He was sick of the suns that were tin foil one day and red blood the next. He was tired of the grim, gray buildings swathed in dirty smoke that made them unreal and evanescent, like the piles and battlements of some great citadel of the infernal world.

And a man who has fairly rounded fifty becomes a sort of human barometer, responding with the greatest delicacy to sudden changes of climate. Just two weeks ago Roth was writing his spring song, and was thinking of beginning his out-of-doors garden; and little children were wing-dancing on the streets. This year's kites were already hanging to the telegraph wires.

The sun was shining brightly on the day when the German felt the tender buds of poetry swelling in his heart. But the sun really stayed but a few hours; and then followed a week of fine rain, and weather so dark that people living in undetached houses were obliged to light the gas in all rooms except the one facing the street. A sky slate-blue, with a few reddish yellow leaves hung to the black, barren branches of the trees. The last time that the artist had gone to Nellie's house he had been oppressed by the dulness and bleakness of everything out of doors. The line of trees down George Avenue struck him as dead, and the straggling bevvies of sparrows that drifted through their branches, as though wind-blown, were as black as ink. Roofs, terra-cotta or a shade of dull brown; acres of drifted sand; and the slate-blue Lake swathed in mist and melting in the indefinite sky.

It was warmer then, but now winter had again closed his iron fist tight upon the vitals of the world; and Dare saw a true arctic scene from his studio window, and he shivered as he looked. No amount of hair-dye can make the blood warm in the veins.

He had closed his bachelor apartments, and stored his furniture, and was sleeping for the last nights in his studio. Wrapped in a woollen bath robe, he stood, very early one morning, looking out

of his window, watching for the sun to rise. The streets were deserted, save for an occasional cab taking some gambler home from an all-night poker game. A train rushed by on the unsightly tracks that deface the Lake front at this point, sobbing out puffs of smoke that might well have been some fleeing dragon's breath made visible by the cold.

When he first looked down upon the Lake, it was merely a dull leaden surface, something flat in a world of shadowy forms. Then it grew a steel color, and slight irregularities took shape upon it. The sun at last seemed to burn its way into the mist, low down, a dim yellow ball, not larger than an orange. It touched the world with a long, slender, yellow pencil.

And the ball grew and grew until it became a huge golden shield, a hundred feet in diameter, with tattered edges. The orange had been a coal, and a wind from the Lake was blowing upon it and making it a fire. A beautiful yellow radiance pervaded the vicinity of the shield, shading off into colder colors in the distance, to dull purple, lemon, slate. The surface of the Lake took definite character and became an arctic scene, with the summits of a thousand ice floes tipped with yellow.

"Ugh!" said Dare, drawing his robe more closely about his shriveled form, "there ought to be a big

polar bear slouching across there, with his head low down, swinging from side to side."

As the minutes passed, the center of the great shield brightened, till at last the face of the sun itself blazed there, a disk of burnished brass, intolerably bright, whose circumference was marked by a plainly drawn circle of dull gold. The frozen Lake glittered like silver.

"That's worth painting," mused Dare; "but it couldn't be done, because the chief element in the effect is change. There was all the hush and expectancy in the pageant that one sees in grand opera, where the appearance of some great dignity is preceded by triumphal music, and the entrance upon the stage of troops with banners, retainers, peasants, and so forth. One might show it by a series of tableaux; but then, nobody would believe it. No, Dare, old boy, Venice is more nearly your size."

With a yawn he turned away from the window, muttering:

"It's a shame the sun gets up so early; if it rose, say, about ten o'clock, a fellow could assist at the ceremony more frequently than twice a year. Well, that's the last sunrise I'll see here for many a day."

He returned to his couch and slept till nearly noon. Then he arose for the day and made a care-



ful and studied toilet. He had determined to pay a farewell visit to Nellie, and his masculine vanity prompted him to leave as favorable and lasting an impression on her as possible.

"Few men of my age would be successful if they went courting in their nightshirts," he soliloquized as he stood critically regarding his reflection in a full-length mirror, with his mind on the costume of the day, much as Roth had studied the dead tree which he proposed to dress in morning-glory vines.

"What an opener of whited sepulchres matrimony must be!" he mused. "The only people who ever approached it from the right standpoint were the ancient Spartans, who gave their young couples a glimpse at each other in nature's garb before they were spliced for life. No civilized nation has this commendable custom to-day, though the same thing exists in effect among the South Sea Islanders. Jove! Imagine the lifelong sorrow and disappointment of an esthete, a true lover of the beautiful, who imagines that he is marrying a Venus, and finds out when it is eternally too late that her legs are too short for her body or that her knees are ugly. On the other hand, what divine justice is there in such a combination as that out at my friend Chapin's? What right has a stupid,

blind yokel to possess a living, God-wrought statue like—like Nellie? Nellie? I should call her Helen."

Dare's eyes were gummy with the exudations of age; his cheeks were sallow; his hair hung straight down over his forehead unparted; one side of his jet-black mustache, the side upon which he had been sleeping, drooped thinly over his colorless lips like the broken wing of a crow. His nightshirt hung loosely about his thin form.

"Ugh!" muttered Dare; "it's devilish hard for an artist to grow old gracefully. He might do it, though, if it weren't for the mornings. I wonder how many famous beauties would look like nymphs coming out of a bath when they first wake up after a night's sleep? Or, say, about half an hour before they wake up? How many have sweet breaths at that time? Ah, nothing but the earliest youth can stand that test."

An hour later, Gifford Dare descended to the street, young, debonair, picturesque, erect. He took his breakfast at a café, and then boarded a North Side car, to say good by to the girl with the red-gold hair; and then, ho, for Venice!

He ascended the stairs to the second flat with a mingled feeling of longing and regret. His heart beat high with that youthful flurry and pride which

seizes the man who is about to enter the presence of the woman whom he loves and who loves him; he was oppressed with an almost intolerable feeling of homesickness at the idea of leaving her, and of putting behind him forever his last flattering adventure, his last chance for youth.

Bridget came to the door. "Yis; Mrs. Chapin is in. Wull ye sit down and wait till she makes herself ready?"

He laid his cloak and slouch hat upon a chair and waited. He could hear her moving about in the bedroom, and, as she progressed with her toilet, he imagined he could hear the rustling of feminine garments as she put them on. He asked himself if she had let her splendid hair down.

At last the door opened, and she came out, all eagerness and strangely agitated.

"Oh, Mr. Dare," she said, advancing and extending her hand, "it's so good of you to come and see me. This is an unexpected pleasure."

"It's good of you to receive me at this unconventional hour," he replied, losing for the moment his aplomb. He did not really stop to think whether the hour was unconventional or not. He stood holding her hand in an embarrassed sort of way, and said inconsequentially:

"I met your landlady downstairs. What an ex-

traordinarily ugly woman she is! It would be a shame to photograph a woman like that."

"Do you think she would break the camera?"

"No; I'm thinking of the poor sensitive plate."

Dare was too agitated to notice that Nellie did not understand.

"That's a desolate-looking scene, isn't it?" he remarked, pointing to the Lake as they sat down by the window. The ice hummocks extended as far out as the crib, and the posts of the half-ruined breakwater had become giant mushrooms of ice. In an open space a berg of respectable size was floating about.

"This is the worst climate on earth," pursued Dare. "You couldn't get a colder, more cheerless prospect than that at the North Pole, nor in St. Petersburg. St. Petersburg! Why, that city is all life, all animation in the winter. Then the Russians begin to live. Gaiety reigns everywhere. Splendid teams of two and three horses dashing by in the streets, the drivers swinging their long whips, the ladies wrapped up in furs, laughing and calling to each other as they meet and pass."

"How lovely it must be to have traveled as much as you have!" said Nellie, her eyes kindling.

"Y-e-s," assented Dare. "It's nice to travel if one has a congenial companion along, but there's

nothing more wearisome than to go about alone. Some men travel for diversion after a great sorrow. They make a mistake. They had better stay at home among their friends—if they have any worthy of the name. You can never go far enough to get away from yourself, and there is no loneliness on earth like that of a stranger in a big city—especially a foreign town. But to travel with a congenial companion, to share the delights of new scenes and new impressions with some one that you, ah—like, that is one of the greatest delights on earth.”

“You are really going to Naples this spring?” asked Nellie.

Dare concluded to have the thing over.

“No, to Venice.”

“To—to Venice?”

She paled to her lips, and dug both her hands into the arms of the upholstered chair in which she was sitting.

“When?” she managed to ask at last in a voice scarcely above a whisper.

Dare glanced at her and turned his head away.

“I start within a week,” he replied, talking rapidly and attempting to assume a matter-of-fact tone. “You see, I made a success quite a number of years ago with some Venetian sketches, but they were crude. I have always had the dream of re-

turning to the city sometime when I had acquired more skill, and doing it right. And I must go now or never. I am getting old. I shall never see forty again." He thought it would make it easier for her if he spoke of his age, but he had not even then the courage to say how old he really was. "I can not stand these violent changes of climate as I once did—twenty years ago. Now you, my dear child, at your age, you can not realize how these bitter spring winds go through a—a—middle-aged man like me." There was a feigned lightness in his voice that would have been deceptive had it not been pitched on too high a note.

Nellie did not speak. She simply looked at him like a deer that he had once wounded. He had never shot anything since, because such a look in the eyes had impressed him as unbeautiful.

"And so I came to say good by," he cried, rising briskly and gathering up his cloak and hat.

Nellie tottered to her feet and stood swaying. She seemed to be leaning toward him.

She did not extend her hand.

"Won't you say good by to me?" he asked tenderly, his cloak thrown over his left arm while he offered his right hand.

"Good by," she said huskily, and then her face became distorted like a child's that is about to cry.

He seized the hand that hung limply by her side and held it in his own for a moment. His cloak and hat slipped to the floor. Then he took her in his arms, and she lay sobbing upon his breast.

He led her to the sofa and sat down beside her with his arm about her waist. She pillowed her head upon his shoulder; and thus they sat for several minutes, she weeping convulsively, he gazing straight ahead and trying to think.

Strangely enough, his mind took in little details of the objects within his visual angle—a French exercise book upon a red table cloth, a cheap lamp with a big globe, the frightful paper on the walls, the black, naked limbs of a tree beyond the window.

She moved, and the red-gold hair was pressed softly against his neck. She smiled sadly when he lifted her chin with his hand, and she returned the kisses which he pressed upon her lips.

At last he rose briskly and, bending over her, took both her hands in his.

"I leave," he said, "Saturday evening for New York on the Michigan Central, and you are coming with me. Listen, Nellie—"

"Yes."

"Don't trouble to pack many things—it might excite suspicion. Just a grip will do. I'll let you know the exact hour of the train's departure, and

you can meet me at the depot. I'll drop you a note not later than Friday. I don't think I'd better come out here again."

He stooped and kissed her once more, then pulled her to her feet, crying with forced gaiety:

"Don't cry any more, little woman. We shall be very happy. And now I must go."

She followed him to the door sobbing:

"It's so wrong!"

"Don't think of that, Nellie. We can't help it. We tried to, but we couldn't."

As he turned the knob she laid both hands upon his shoulder and looked yearningly at him, her face paling with a sudden terror that changed on the instant to shame. All the blood in her body seemed to flood her pallid cheeks as she hid her forehead in his breast, murmuring hoarsely:

"Will you marry me as soon as I am free? Will you, Gifford? Promise me this, and I will go."

A man promises anything at such times.

"Of course," he replied, "if—if you want me to."

"If I want you to! I wouldn't go else. I'm not a bad woman, Gifford.



## CHAPTER XXVII

### ANOTHER SORT OF POET

Dare was shaking so when he reached the street that he turned instinctively to the saloon on the corner for a glass of brandy, muttering:

"Well, I've done it, after all, or rather it did itself; and I'm not going to have any qualms over it. No man of my temperament, fifty years old, can resist a beautiful woman who loves him. Venality is always ugly, but there isn't the least bit of venality in this. The love of a beautiful woman is the most beautiful thing on earth. Man made God in his own image, and the gods of the old Greeks, the only nation of artists that the world ever saw, simply couldn't resist this sort of thing. Bah! I'm no puritan. Puritanism is the ugliness of religion."

As he lifted his drink to his lips with shaking hand he reflected:

"No gentleman would poison his friend's dog, or steal his money; but almost any man would win his friend's wife—if he got the chance."

Later the thought comforted him that Harry was not his friend.

"I've only been polite to him," he mused. "If he were my friend, now, or I had posed as such, it would be different. I couldn't do that. No, I'm no such damned villain as that."

Despite the brandy, his teeth chattered with the cold as he stood on the corner waiting for the electric car.

"I believe we'll go to Algiers," he mused. "I've told so many people that I'm going to Venice. Yes, it'll be better to go somewhere else and wait till the world gets a little bit accustomed to this thing. U-g-g-h," he chattered, "Algiers and Nellie will be better than this." And he thought of the oriental background; and the different costumes in which he would paint his living statue, his odalisque, his Cleopatra, his Gulnare.

By the time he again reached his studio, all the promptings of his rudimentary conscience were silenced, and he had become cynical, selfish, and atheistic.

"Pshaw!" he sneered, as he pulled down the Kiskilm curtains from the door of the alcove, "we make a mistake in taking ourselves too seriously. This world is only a great cheese, after all, and men and women breed on it like maggots."

The action let a shaft of afternoon sun into the studio that fell upon Bodenhausen's Madonna hanging on the wall, and tinted the cataract of loosened hair with gold. Dare started, and remained standing before the picture worshipping.

"That's the way Helen's hair would look if she were to let it down," he mused. "I never see a beautiful woman, anyway, that I don't want to unfasten her hair. This chap Bodenhausen, Madonna painter, must have a little of the sensual in him. Well, damn it, that's all right. You can't think of the ideal woman with any degree of physical repugnance. You can't see her, whether she be Madonna or Venus, without wanting to carry her off and break any possible rival's head with a club, in the good old primitive fashion. That's the way God or Jupiter, or Nature, or whoever he or it is, made us.

"But beauty has a higher attraction, too. Being an expression of perfection, it lifts us toward the Eternal Divine, which revels in perfections. What a soft yielding body this Madonna has—and the artist has had the good sense to paint her without shoes. Those feet are the climax of the whole composition. Not too small, but warm, fragrant, rosy, shapely. I should like to take this one in my hand. What is it that Sir John says?

*"Her feet beneath her petticoat  
Like little mice stole in and out.*

"Hum. That's not right, Sir John, not right. You've got them entirely too small, though the lines are dainty and have made you immortal.

"By showing these feet, Bodenhauseu has given us an impression of perfection in all details. What a horror this thing would be if Mary had a bunion, or if her second toe were too short! Ugh! I should have pitched her out o' the window long ere this."

He glanced again at the hair, still touched by the red sun. Then he stooped and kissed one of the feet.

"I pay you this tribute, Mary—Helen," he muttered, "I am always willing to kiss the feet of beauty.

"What an ass is the man who asks whether or not a fair woman has brains! You might as well ask it of a statue or a picture. All beautiful creations have brains—the brains of the man or the God who made them!"

## CHAPTER XXVIII

### THE HAPPIEST MAN

Two days later Mr. Dare was picking his way daintily along La Salle Street. Though but four o'clock in the afternoon, it was already growing dark, and the electric lights were gleaming fiercely in the back offices and basements. The temperature had risen twenty degrees during the night, and a rain, fine as spray, was persistently falling. The walk was swimming in a thin coating of black filth, and the horses were slipping on the greasy cobblestones. The vast cañon of the street was filled with a steady roar and clatter that went up to the narrow lane of dirty sky above. Shouts and broken fragments of speech flew off from the plutonian hum like bits from a roaring wheel.

A ragged little newsboy scurried past in frantic haste to reach his favorite corner, crying with indomitable lungs the five-o'clock edition of an afternoon sheet: "All about the terrible murder on the West Side!"

The driver of a street car, delayed by an apathetic van, clanged his bell hopelessly.

The contour of the buildings loomed blackly from the all-pervading gray. There was a raw feeling in the air, as of the wind from melting ice. The throng on the street at this hour consisted mostly of men; and the artist noticed with a shudder that they were all talking about money, entirely oblivious of their surroundings.

Once, a face, fresh as a flower, peeped out at him from the hood of a rain-coat, and a pair of roguish eyes looked innocently and fearlessly into his. He felt an interested thrill, the emotion of an old beau who has made a conquest and is conscious that he is still a devil of a fellow among the women. Let the sex look out for themselves! Had not the fairest of them all fallen before his irresistible charms?

And, indeed, any lady with the faintest streak of adventure in her nature, might have taken a second look at him this afternoon, for he had certainly effected an elegant and distinguished air; and in the uncertain light he appeared young. He was correctly attired in a prince-albert, with light trousers, and a long overcoat, with tails, that fitted gracefully into the hollow of his back. His thin, languid, smiling face was only above a collar of

extraordinary height; and a silk umbrella, held by a hand neatly gloved in gray, protected his tall hat. His feet were daintily shod, and he had somehow managed not to soil his trousers.

At the corner of Madison Street he met Harry Chapin and the two men nodded to each other.

Harry looked rather shabby and had entirely lost the debonair bearing of his bachelor days. He wore a spring overcoat that did not fit well about the collar, and a cheap derby tilted back from his high forehead. He walked with a lifeless shuffle, and his face had a weary, hopeless expression. Dare turned and looked after him, impelled by that mixed emotion of pity, friendliness, and gratitude which a *roué* often feels for the deceived husband.

"Hello, Chapin!" he cried, and Harry stopped and turned.

"Out mashing?" asked the latter. "I see you've got your glad rags on."

"No," laughed Dare, "I'm not a masher. My mashing days are over. I leave that to young fellows like you. Where are you going so fast?"

"Back to the office. I've been over to the County Building looking up some titles."

"At least you have time to take a drink?"

Harry brightened.

"Sure. God doesn't expect me for a hour yet."

"God?"

"Yes. Old Blodgett—the man who sent me."

Dare passed his arm through that of the younger man and looked about him, asking:

"Where's the nearest saloon?"

"There's a pretty decent joint over there," replied Harry. "Jimmy Ferguson's buffet."

"That'll do," said Dare. "You can get just as drunk at a buffet as at a bar."

They crossed the street and went down two steps into one of the most respectable saloons in the city, a small, narrow place with a couple of private rooms for the convenience of men who wished to talk confidentially over their wine or whisky.

They entered one of these and sat down at a round table.

"What'll it be?" asked the artist, as the colored waiter entered.

"I'll take a dry martini, with an olive in it," ordered Harry, with considerable animation.

Dare took a pony of French cognac; and, as soon as the drinks were consumed, ordered two more. Harry straightened out first one leg and then the other, as he felt in his pockets.

"It's up to me," he said, rather feebly, for he found but twenty cents.

"Not a bit of it," replied Dare. "The fact is,





There's a pretty  
thick joint



I'm going away Saturday, and this is a sort of farewell treat."

"Going away? to New York? I wish I could get away somewhere for a while—any old place. I've got tired of going down to my office and back home again. Year in and year out the same thing—and Sunday the longest day in the week. I believe it would do me good to break loose and go on a spree—regular old-fashioned round-up. Any old thing to break up the monotony of life."

Harry had finished his second cocktail, and was trying to spear the olive with a tooth-pick. His stomach was empty, he was unaccustomed to drink, and his manhood was at a low ebb. The two cocktails, which in his palmy days would not have affected him, now brought him to that stage of incipient intoxication where a man feels sorry for himself and desirous of sympathy.

"Why don't you take a night off once in a while?" asked Dare, sipping his cognac.

"I'm on to myself. If I ever got started once, it would be all off. I'd lose my job, and then where would I be? Where would Nell be?"

"Yes, of course," replied the artist, "there's your wife to think of. A married man has obligations."

"Yes, that's it,—a married man has obligations. Marriage is for better or worse."

The thought occurred to Dare that if Harry were a little more under the influence of drink, he might possibly reveal his feelings for his wife. If he did not love Nellie, if he were tired of her, the knowledge would take much of the moral ugliness out of the act which the artist was contemplating.

"Let's have a quart of champagne," he suggested. "I'm leaving the country for good. I'm going to Naples. A man doesn't go to Naples every day."

"Champagne?" repeated Harry, more interested in the old, familiar sound than in the artist's destination: "I haven't drunk a glass of champagne since I was married. But ain't things comin' pretty swift? I don't want to get good. What'd my wife say?"

"I fear you're taking married life too seriously," laughed the artist. "The model married man never goes home drunk. He waits till he sobers up. But I'll explain things to Nel—Mrs. Chapin."

The negro brought the champagne with that added respect in his manner which this particular order always inspires in the colored breast. Even Harry, unpromising as he had heretofore appeared to the waiter, now became a person of importance. "Gents do not buy wine for nobodies," he reasoned, and he filled Harry's glass with an ob-

sequiousness that brought back to his mind the old days when he was a star guest at Ma'am Galli's.

"Here's a pleasant voyage," said Harry as they touched glasses. "Naples is a pretty nice place, isn't it?"

He finished the second glass with the inconsequential remark:

"That'll help some."

During the third, he placed his twenty cents upon the table and repeated:

"That'll help some."

"Put your money back in your pocket," said Dare, smiling. "This is my day. What do you want?" The artist was perfectly sober.

"Some cigarettes."

"All right, I'll order some Condax straw tips, real Turkish you know. The genuine thing."

"Not for me," said Harry. "America's good enough for me. I'll take a small package of Sweet Caporal."

They were brought, and he lighted one, remarking again:

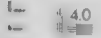
"That'll help some."

"You were saying," observed Dare, fearful lest his companion should lose his senses entirely, "that marriage was for better or for worse."



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"Yes, that's so—fer better 'r fer worse—principally worse."

"But that's treason, old man, with such a beautiful and accomplished wife as you have. You ought to be the happiest man on earth."

"Happies' man on earth," repeated Harry. "Say, ol' man, she's a peach. Here's to the peach!"

"Then why do you say that 'marriage is principally worse'?" persisted Dare. "Isn't she as good as she is beautiful?"

Harry began to ramble on in a maudlin whine:

"Shay, Mr. Dare, don't you ever get married. Take my word f'rit, marriage'z a failure. Look a' me. I'm an ass—a hem-stitched ass. W'y b'fore I wuz married, I had a good time—money'n my pocket, an' friends, an' a good time—I had a good time. Now wha's life for me? Just a damn grind. Every day the same, an' Sunday the longes' day of all."

Resting with his elbows on the table and his head in his hands, he was the picture of drunken self-pity.

"D'you know me b'fore I was married?" he asked. "No, of course not. Well, if you had, you'd know what marriage has done f'r me. Kind of a 'b'fore taking and after taking,' y' know, like you see in the patent pill advertisements. Only'n



my case you ought to—put the 'after taking' first—see?—ought to put it first, an' call it 'b'fore taking'—see?"

"Yes," said Dare smiling, "I see."

"I'm a sort of horrible example of matrimony," continued Harry. "I married f'r love—umph, what's love? It's the s'motion—emotion, I mean, of a damn fool. 'S a dream that you wake up from when it's too late. Misser D-Dare, a man ain't responsible when he's in love; he ough'n't to be held responsible f'r his ac's. But he is; an' he goes and spoils his whole life at a time when he ain't responsible—when he's bug house."

"You ought to enlist in the army," remarked Dare. "Unhappy married men make the bravest soldiers."

The situation was becoming exquisite; it quite restored him to his happiest self.

"You see," continued Harry, "it's like this. You marry f'r love, an' then you've got to keep right on living with a woman after you get wise again. 'Fore I was married, I had friends, 'n' good clothes, and I ate porter-house steaks and camembert cheese. What do I get out of matrimony? You see me—look a' me an' look a' you—Misser Dare, I like you. You're a frien' o' mine. Promise me you'll never get married."

Harry insisted on shaking hands with his friend over the promise.

"Does she love you?" asked the artist slyly.

"Love me? Yes she does—not. All she thinks of is running around to hen-clubs and talking French. She never thinks of me. All I get out o' marriage is a place to sleep in that's no home at all, an' she spends all my money f'r things that I don't want and, anyhow, don't get."

"Well, perhaps you're to be congratulated," laughed Dare. "Married men say there's no greater nuisance than a wife who is too deeply in love with her husband. She's a very beautiful woman. Perhaps somebody'll elope with her."

"Elope with her?" whined Harry. "There's no such good luck f'r me. B'sides, Nell wouldn't do it. She's too damn r'ligious. Why, that woman won't even play cards with me, b'cause she thinks it's wrong."

"Oh, you never can tell what a woman is going to do next," insisted Dare. "She's certainly beautiful enough to tempt anybody."

"Tha's what I thought b'fore I married her," replied Harry, slowly shaking his head. "Tha's just what I thought." Then he looked at the door to see if it were closed and hitched his chair up closer to the artist.

Poor Harry! drunk as he was, a certain amount of self-respect and delicacy clung to him.

"Misser Dare," he whispered, "yo 're a frien' o' mine. One o' the bes' frien's I ever had. I know that. S-shake. 'F you could see that woman slouchin' 'round the house 'z I see her, you'd never think she was a good-looker f'r a minute. You ought t' see her with her hair down once, f'rinstance. Changes the whole expression of her face, somehow. Makes me think of a rat lookin' out of a hole. An' she's got the ugliest feet—they're as red as boiled lobsters, an' all swelled up at the joints. Makes her feet kind o' kite-shaped—jus' like boys' kites. I—a man oughtn' talk this way 'bout his wife, but you're a frien' o' mine—bes' frien' I ever had, Misser Dare, 'n' I know you'd do anything on earth to help me. Yes, her feet are like a pair of kites—you could tie strings to 'em and fly 'em."

Poor Harry! The artist gulped down a glass of champagne at a swallow, and a look of disgust spread over his thin, esthetic face. He remembered his last interview with the Bodenhause Ma-donna.

"Whew," he said, looking at his watch. "We've been here an hour now. We must be going."

"D'you think God would notice I've been drink-

ing?" asked Harry, struggling into his overcoat, of which the lining in one sleeve was loose.

"We'll walk up and down in the cold air for a few minutes," said Dare, "and then you'll be all right."

As they parted at the corner, Harry was sober enough to feel ashamed.

"Don't mention to anybody what I told you," he pleaded. "I put it on a little too thick, I guess. Nell's all right. At any rate, I married her with my eyes open, and I've got to take my medicine."

"Not a word," said the artist, sympathetically. "I'm going away to Ven—Naples this week, and nobody knows anything about you over there. But cheer up, old man. Somebody'll run off with her yet; you see if they don't—feet and all."

## CHAPTER XXIX

### THE TRUMPET NARCISSUS

What puppets of fortune we are! The slightest, most adventitious circumstances,—a word dropped here or there, a chance meeting on the street, the failure to catch a car, may work the most portentous change in our destinies and alter the whole current of our lives. And through it all, even those who deny the existence of a God, must see an inexorable reckoning in the long run, a paying off of old debts, and a final compensation of some sort for those who are faithful to their best selves. If there is no God, and the universe is run by that mighty and brainless but exact automaton, Law, then final justice must be one of the principles of the eternal Order.

There is no man so faithless but he has a superstitious fear that the consequences of his evil acts will overtake him; none so cynical that he does not feel surer of his future if his life be right.

Roth's good fortune and reward came to him

through the fact that he was in the habit of buying his bulbs, seeds and potted plants at Wittbold's, on Buckingham Place. He might easily have gone to some other florist, but he had been enticed therein one day by a display of begonias, and found the beautiful young daughter of the proprietor so intelligent and obliging that he became a regular patron. Moreover, he found enthusiasts there with whom he could talk concerning his beloved plants, people who responded to his own enthusiasm and respected it.

When, therefore, a wealthy St. Louis brewer wrote to old man Wittbold, and asked to be recommended to a competent German gardener, a man to superintend a greenhouse and a park and a lawn, the young lady told her father that she believed Roth was just the man for the place. The brewer came to the city, met Roth, was charmed with him, and hired him at a salary of two thousand dollars a year, with cottage rent free, and a patch of ground for his own vegetable garden.

"To live among flowers, *mein Schatz*," he whispered to his wife, with tears in his eyes and his arm around her waist, "in a cottage—oh, you shall see the vines that shall over it grow! And the dear children playing under the trees! Ah, life shall be one song, eh, my love?"

"Life has always been a song with you," she replied, her low, sweet voice trembling with joy.

"True," he cried, "love is the music of life, and where that is, the heart sings, in cottage, in palace, or in tenement."

While they were packing up Harry scarcely realized that they were actually going, nor was he seized with a full sense of the utter desolation which their departure meant for him. He was uncle Harry to the Roth children, for whom he experienced a feeling almost paternal, and whose little voices filled the empty chambers in his own heart with a welcome music. The sound of hammering and of the dragging of heavy boxes about on the floor above made him sad, it is true; but the children were there yet, and he saw the Roths every morning and evening.

When he came up the stairs, if the door above were open, he could hear the gleeful shouts of Fritz and Bismarck Goethe. They would have made a picnic of the preparations for moving had the family been going to meaner fortunes instead of brighter.

At last the van was sent away, and Harry accompanied the Roth family to the station on Friday morning, the day before the Saturday set by the artist for his elopement with Nellie.

Grandpa Roth took charge of Bismarck Goethe, whom he carried to the Evanston Avenue car on account of the mud. Fritz, in knickerbockers, a German cap, and a neat little overcoat made by his mother from an old garment of his father's, ran on ahead, returning every moment to shout that he heard a car coming. His face was flushed with excitement, and his flaxen curls danced in the wind. Mrs. Roth carried a bundle and a cloth telescope grip that nearly pulled her arm to the sidewalk, and Harry took charge of the hamper. Roth himself bore a flower-pot in each hand, containing plants for which he had a peculiar affection, a Roman hyacinth and a trumpet narcissus.

Evalina, wearing a long cravenette coat and a new spring hat trimmed with violets that somewhat forced the season, tripped along with her hands in her pockets, the only thoroughly American figure in the group. There was something reminiscent of continental peasant life in all this carrying of bundles.

Grandpa Roth was greatly distressed lest they lose the train, during the entire journey to the depot. When they finally arrived, he ran about the gloomy, clanging station with Bismarck Goethe's head nestled against his shaggy be-whiskered face, and inquired of several employees



which was the St. Louis train. After a burly policeman had confirmed the information given by each of these, he adjusted his big iron-rimmed spectacles and read the announcements on the board. Then he returned to the party, who were standing among their bundles talking, and pointed out to them the right track.

"Subbose ve got on the wrong train," he said; "ve might come by Milvankee, or Oshkosh, or—or Biffalo."

And when the company's crier called out the names of a long list of stations ending with St. Louis, he shouted triumphantly:

"Didn't I told you so?" and started briskly for the train, beckoning and shouting: "Come on, come on, or ve got left!"

"I'm all broke up at losing you folks," Harry was saying to Roth. "You're the only friends I've got. I don't know what I'm ever going to do without you—I swear to God I don't. And the kids—it seems as if they were my own. It seems as though you were takin' my own kids away from me. I ain't got any of my own, you know."

"You poor man!" said Mrs. Roth, who with a woman's intuition knew that Harry's wife was to blame for his unhappiness. "We'll write to you often, and the children shall put something into

every letter. Bismarck shall write a letter every week to uncle Harry, won't you, Bismarck? He writes to his auntie Frieda in Germany," she explained. "He just makes marks all over a sheet of paper, and she's so glad to get them! She says she thinks more of them than she does of my letters."

"You'll write to uncle Harry, won't you?" said Chapin, pulling the boy out of his grandfather's arms. "Uncle Harry loves you."

"Mama and papa and Santa Claus and Humpty Dumpty loves me," replied the little fellow, "and unc' Harry loves me, too."

"You must have children of your own," said Roth; "you're so fond of 'em; but you don't know what it is to love one till you have some of your own. Ah, when your own baby's voice calls you 'papa,' then you'll hear music—soul music! Then your work will be easy all the day, and your home the dearest place on earth."

The time for the train's departure arrived unexpectedly, as is always the case when there are heartfelt good bys to be said. Harry helped the family and the bundles on board, kissed the children, shook hands hurriedly with the elders, and started for the door.

Roth rushed after him at the last moment and kissed him squarely on the lips.

"Here, take this," he said, offering the hyacinth. "No, this, for I love it the most. And remember what I say about the children. They of marriage are the flowers. Where they bloom, there is the perfume of holy love."

A moment later Harry was standing on the platform, holding awkwardly in his hand a flower-pot containing a bush of long, slender leaves, above which nodded three or four trumpet-shaped blossoms of the large narcissus.

The Roth family were at the window of the moving train, waving their hands at him; but the picture that lingered longest in his mind was the shaggy countenance of grandpa Roth, pressed against the pane, between the fresh, eager faces of Fritz and Bismarck Goethe.

## CHAPTER XXX

### HIS ONE CHANCE

Harry came home in the evening through a drizzling rain, his narcissus under his arm, and over his head an umbrella whose one naked rib projected like an accusing finger.

He was somewhat comforted by finding Nellie strangely sweet to him. She kissed him as he entered, an unusual attention, and asked him solicitously if he had wet his feet.

"What a beautiful flower!" she exclaimed, taking the plant from his hands and setting it on a chair. "We must see that this one does not die. Where did you get it, dear?"

"Roth gave it to me," he replied, "just as they were going away."

"Such an interesting family!" she sighed; "and did the dear little boys cry when you bade them good by?"

There was a hectic flush in her cheek, which added to her beauty; and a nervous alertness in

her movements, which made Harry dimly wonder if she had taken pity on his sorrow and was going to turn over a new leaf. The excellence of the supper which she had prepared for him almost confirmed this belief. Her trunk, for the man's idea of a satchel proved inadequate to the woman, was packed and waiting in readiness at that moment.

Harry's hopes were short-lived, for Nellie left the table before the meal was finished, and, taking up a book, pretended to read.

"Don't mind me," she explained; "I'm getting up a paper for the club, and I have to put in every minute."

She had not yet heard from the artist, and she was in a nervous state almost bordering on hysteria. Whenever she heard feet on the walk below her heart pounded. Perhaps that was the messenger, and how should she take in the letter without exciting her husband's suspicions? Once, the street door opened and shut with a slam, and she arose, glancing warily at Harry and supporting herself by resting both hands upon the table, faint almost to falling. It was a false alarm, and she sat down again.

Harry stifled an oath when she left the supper table, and finished his meal in gloomy silence.

Then he went upstairs and looked into the Roths' deserted flat. A dim light from the street lamp shone in through the windows upon the bare walls and flickered faintly about the ceiling. He scratched a match on the sole of his shoe and lit the gas. He wandered through the parlors, out into the kitchen, and into the bedrooms.

There were square patches of a lighter shade on the walls where the pictures had been, and the parlor floors were covered with old newspapers, mostly copies of the *Staats Zeitung*, that had been laid beneath the carpets. Roth's wire flower-rack, which was not worth moving, still stood by the window, with one little red pot on it, containing a dead and withered flower. In one of the bedrooms Harry found an old hat of Evalina's, from which she had torn the trimming and then thrown the thing away. Everything was gone from the mother's sleeping room except an antiquated wooden cradle, which even Bismarck Goethe had outgrown, and which had been kept under the bed in readiness for matrimonial contingencies. Roth himself made it in the days when they were living happily on twelve dollars a week, and wished to take it along for sentimental reasons; but he had been overpowered by Evalina's unexpected outcry:

"What, that old Noah's ark? That old chop-

ping bowl? We're taking so much trash along already that people will think we're a pack of beggars."

So the baby's cradle was left behind. On the kitchen table was a pile of broken and discarded dishes, and the remnants of a last lunch—some pieces of bread, some egg shells, and a tin box with one sardine in it.

On the kitchen walls and in the bedrooms were numerous pictures from the Sunday editions of the newspapers. These were tacked up, and in two or three instances one corner lopped down, where a tack had been pulled out for a special emergency of moving.

Harry felt overpowered by sadness. He was as deeply moved as though he were visiting the grave of a dear friend, now no more. Indeed, he knew the Roth family was dead to him. St. Louis, with his meager pocketbook and his implacable round of work, was as far off as another world could have been.

Though he knew it not, he was visiting a vault—the saddest possible kind of vault—a deserted house. The place, like the lineaments of a dead face, was familiar yet strange. Everything that reminded him of his dear friends only served to make more poignant the fact that they were gone.

As in the case of death, so in that of an empty house, familiarity and desertion are the chief elements of grief, each strengthening the other. The place was haunted. The very silence whispered of happy, childish voices; the phantoms of familiar forms took vague shape in the emptiness.

As Harry left the flat he stepped on a soft object in the hall, and, stooping, picked it up. It was Bismarck Goethe's toy dog, a comical, shapeless object, whose legs resembled the tied corners of a wine skin. It was very dirty, and one of the glass beads that did for eyes was gone. But Harry put it in his pocket, murmuring:

"The little feller's dog! I wonder if he'll miss it when he goes to sleep?" For Bismarck Goethe often refused to close his eyes until he had made a complete inventory of his playthings, and they were all piled upon the bed beside him.

During Harry's brief absence from the room, Nellie ran every moment to the window, parted the lace curtains, and peered down into the street. She did not even know yet which train they were to take. Perhaps he would send word in the morning, but it seemed strange that he should wait almost till the last moment.

Now that she had really made up her mind to go, she felt no longer the least compunction. She



threw all prudence, all religious scruples, modesty, to the winds; and was possessed of a delirium to be away with Dare—on the train with him, on the sea with him, in foreign lands alone with him. If she did not hear from him soon, it seemed as though she must cry out. What sort of stupid brute was her husband that he did not notice her agitation? Even his blindness in this matter added to her disgust for Harry. He was so stupid! It seemed to her as though the very air were rife with Dare, as though his name were written on the walls.

When she heard Harry's footsteps on the stairs, she dropped again into her chair and picked up the book. He shuffled past without so much as looking at her, lit the gas in the front room, and commenced to read a paper-covered novel that he had bought for ten cents a few days before. It was a love story of the Bertha Clay order, and it did not appeal to him. He slid down in the chair, his chin dropped upon his breast, and he began to snore.

Nellie glanced at him. He had grown older fast during the last year. He was quite bald now on the top of his head, and the straight, black hairs which fell to his ears on either side were powdered with encroaching gray. There was no gaiety in his thin countenance, and with every snore there

was a slight uplift to his upper lip and a wrinkling of his nose that was pitifully droll. Baldness had made his forehead unnaturally high and narrow, and his temples seemed cut down square, as though sawed. He was a picture of sleeping weakness and petulance, but Nellie found no pity in her heart for him. Pity is akin to love, and she loved Dare.

While Harry snored, the messenger came, a tiny boy who stamped and stumbled up the steps with noise enough for a drunken giant. Nellie opened the door before he had a chance to knock, and snatched the letter from him with joyful eagerness. She knew what it contained: simply some figures, probably, that no one would understand but herself—the hour at which the train departed.

"This here message was to uv been brought at t'ree o'clock," explained the boy, as she wrote her name in his book, "but there wan't no kids in de office. I'd have been here an hour earlier, but I got onto de Evanston car and went about two miles out o' my way. I done meself out o' ten cents car fare."

He waited for a tip, or at least to be reimbursed, but saw that it was hopeless as soon as she began to read her letter.

"Gee! that must have been bad news what I carried out to de Nort' Side," he explained to a com-

rade later. "De lady clutched herself like dis, see, like dis, Chimmy, and staggered up against de door, an' said, 'My God!' just like a lady in a t'eater."

This is what Nellie read:

"My Darling—This is to bid you good by, and to ask your forgiveness for any pain that I may have brought into your life. When in your dear presence the other day, I gave way to my love for you, and yielded to the overwhelming passion of the moment. If I were to see you now, I should carry you off with me to the end of the world. But when I am away from you, I realize that it would be selfish and ignoble of me to ruin your reputation for my own selfish pleasure. You are now a respectable married woman, and you were happy before you knew me. If I were to take you away, your high principles and religious training would triumph in the end, and you would be unhappy. You would weary of the old man, and then where would you be? As it is, you will soon forget him, and then you will realize that I do this for love of you. Try to realize it a little now, will you not, my darling? If you knew how much it makes me suffer to write this, and to do this, you would know how much I love you. I shall be a lonely man all the rest of my life, Nellie. My darling, good by, good by. Having taken this re-

solve, I can no longer endure to remain so near you, and I take the train for New York this afternoon."

No name was signed, but Nellie needed no signature to assure her who was the author of that minute, elegant hand, with the long "l's" and letters below the line.

She came into the room like one stunned, holding the missive in her hand, forgetful of Harry. There was a roaring in her ears, and her staring eyes saw Dare's face looking pale out from the window of a rushing train—rushing away from her forever.

Harry woke with a start and a comical, sensational finale to a long snore. He glanced at his wife over the top of his glasses, and his eye was attracted by the white thing in her hand.

"Is it a bill, Nell?" he asked petulantly.

The Chapins' mail consisted ordinarily of numerous letters from Ireland to the servant girl, of bills, and an occasional tirade from the old fanatic out in Dixon.

Harry was not greatly interested in it.

"Yes, it's a bill," she replied, furtively tearing it into bits as she went toward her bedroom. "The—the milk bill." And then she added, with a cheap woman's supreme instinct for concealment, even when wounded to death:

"People who—who send bills never get your name wrong."

She had once heard Dare say that.

So passed Harry's one chance; and the years are weary, the years are long. He tossed the book upon a small table and yawned as he glanced aimlessly about the familiar room. He felt sleepy no longer, and he could not read. Solitaire was repugnant to his unselfish nature, and Nell thought she preferred Maeterlinck to cards. As he leaned forward in the little wooden rocker, with a sham tapestry on the back representing a drinking scene at a Swiss inn, it squeaked dismally. All the furniture, shrunk by the steam heat, had become querulous and rickety. Long strands of pliable willow, loosened from the chairs, hung about their legs like fallen socks or dying serpents. The dark green paper, though Harry did not know it, had a depressing effect. It was darker than two years ago, and the peacock-blue border was almost black. There were none of those cheerful effects about the room with which a true woman, however inartistic, decorates the home that she loves.

The wind was high and Harry could hear it breathing through the bare limbs of the tree without the window, and wailing as it fled down the court between his house and the one adjoining.

The cold waves of the Lake, beating against the breakwater, made a low, steady roar, as of a railroad train, rushing by in the distance and the night. And at regular intervals an awful sound came to his ears through the disconsolate darkness—the most desolate and mournful sound in the world. It was the homesick yawn of an old lion in the park.

## CHAPTER XXXI

### A CLEAN RECORD

Edward Crissey was elected to Congress in the fall, after a stormy campaign, during which he stumped his district with surprising eloquence, power and indefatigability. Although all the forces of unlimited money and unprincipled intrigue were arrayed against him, he carried the day by sheer personal magnetism, force of character, and honesty too evident to be doubted. When he appeared upon a platform, self-contained, though his handsome face was flushed, when he ran his fingers through his white hair and extended his hand, everybody within reach of his voice, friend and enemy, was eager to hear what he had to say. And when that clear, earnest voice, audible to the farthest limits of the largest throng, thrilled the expectant air, all doubts as to his motives, all poisonous rumors, were swept away as noxious vapors disappear before the sane breath of morning.

He was elected, by a small majority, it is true,

but he was elected; and great was the rejoicing among the decent element. For Crissey represented that large but usually inert body of voters who too often keep out of politics as something repugnant to men of finer feelings. College professors made speeches for him; the best class of business men canvassed in his behalf; retired property holders, who had drifted away from the turmoil of the fighting world, awakened to an interest in his campaign for decency's sake.

During all this time Dolly saw less of her husband than ever. In the whirl and stress of his great political battle he seemed almost to have forgotten the existence of his family. He was away whole days at a time, and, when in the city, he flitted in and out of the house at unexpected hours, giving a hurried kiss here and there, and inquiring after the health of Dolly and the children in a cheery but perfunctory manner. Many meals were eaten without him; and when at home he spent much of his time in his study, dictating in a monotonous murmur to his secretary, or declaiming eloquent passages of forthcoming speeches.

Often he was closeted with political emissaries and aids, men from every grade of society, some of them characters whom Dolly felt sure were disreputable.



And the poor little woman was suffering all this time in silence; for when the poisoned barb of jealousy enters a woman's heart, you may pull away the shaft, but the head of the arrow remains behind. She knew that he must be very busy, but she did not believe that he was as preoccupied as he pretended. Moreover, the opposition could not forego that cheap weapon of attack upon his private character, and dark hints were thrown out, especially in Murchison's organ, that he was not the saint that he would have the public believe. It was even intimated that there were certain scandalous episodes in his private career, cleverly concealed.

These latter rumors, so easily started and so easily believed by the prurient-minded, he treated with silent contempt; but Dolly read them all secretly, and, while she was too proud even to admit that she knew of them, they added to her misery. She could not forget the giggling interview in her husband's study, nor the private meeting by night in his office. Upon such frail foundations of proof does jealousy build its palace of misery.

The night after the election there was a grand and noisy demonstration before Crissey's new house. A shouting and turbulent crowd began to straggle up as early as seven o'clock, and later the strains of a brass band were heard in the distance,

the music gradually increasing in intensity as the players approached. The sounds suddenly ceased as a tune was finished somewhere down the street, only to break out again with startling and tremendous fervor beneath the very windows to the inspiring strains of "Hail Columbia." Little Dorothy fluttered to the windows and pressed her sweet face against the pane, shrieking, "Moosic! Moosic! The moosic mans has come!"

The street was now a fairy wilderness of waving torches, a pandemonium of multitudinous shouts. And at last a certain method took possession of this indiscriminate uproar, that yielded to the insistence of a nucleus that was shouting one refrain in time—a refrain that was strengthened by the rhythmical "Boom—boom, boom, boom, boom!" of a drum. Order grew out of chaos, the throng was shouting as one man:

"Crissey! Crissey—Congressman Crissey!"

"Speech, speech—speech, speech, speech."

The new member came out upon an upper balcony, attired in full evening dress, handsomer and manlier looking than he had ever appeared before in his life. He was smiling, and he ran his fingers through his white hair in the old familiar, the beloved, way.

He extended both his arms in a gesture com-

manding silence, but neither the throng nor the band would have it so. While the crowd shouted its hoarse admiration and joy, the musicians played, with all the breath in their lungs, "Lo, the Conquering Hero Comes."

At least half a dozen times he opened his mouth ineffectually, like a man trying to shout down a storm at sea. But when finally he could be heard, there was a great stilling of the waters.

"My fellow citizens," he began, "my dear neighbors and friends—" and what a speech he made!

All the triumph of half a lifetime's struggle, the joy in a brave fight fairly won, the gratitude of an honest man who had not been betrayed, poured from his lips in spontaneous, strenuous, eloquent periods.

When he finished with feeling, "And now, good night, my neighbors and friends," there was no doubt that he was the most popular man in town, and that the future held for him whatever clusters of promise he might wish to reach after. The flambeaux fluttered away quietly and poured down the street a stream of flaring lights. But before they had entirely disappeared from view, some one with leather lungs shouted:

"What's the matter with Crissey?" and a hundred voices replied: "He's all right."

And the band, with no direction from the leader,

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broke out with the true national air of America, that tune to which Americans fight and rejoice best, that tune which bursts from them spontaneously whenever they wish to express their tensest feelings in music!

"There'll Be a Hot Time in the Old Town Tonight!"

Oh, that some Tyrtæus would write fitting words to suit it!

Little Dorothy lifted her short skirts and pirouetted about the parlor, singing frantically:

*One dark night, when everybody wuz in bed,  
Mrs. O'Larry lit her lamp 'n the shed;  
The cow kicked it over and winked he's eye an'  
said—*

## CHAPTER XXXII

### A CRUCIAL MOMENT

The unhappiness in Dolly Crissey's life arose principally from loneliness and lack of comradeship with the husband whom she worshiped. His business and the intellectual world in which he lived were as inaccessible to her as the planet Mars. Though proud of him to the point of worship, she often felt that she would have been happier had he been a commoner man, so that she might have shared his mental struggles, and have understood and lightened his secret disappointments. He was most kind to her, it is true; she could not remember that he had ever spoken a cross word to her. But he did not make love to her. Dolly was one of those women who retain through all the years the heart of the young bride. One tender word, one lover-like kiss, is worth more to them than social triumphs or aught that wealth can give.

Dolly could not conceive how anybody could live without love; and as soon as she felt herself neglect-

ed she took for granted that her husband must be interested in some one else.

She so wanted to help him, too; to work side by side with him! As he steadily mounted the ladder of success, her own occupations grew more and more insignificant in her eyes. To look after meals, to wash and dress children and to put them to bed, to care for the house and her husband's comfort, why, any housekeeper could have done that.

"If I were to die this very day," she frequently mused, "Edward would never miss me. He could hire some one to take my place for five dollars a week. It would be better for him if I were to die, for then he could marry some brilliant society woman whom he would be proud of."

Poor Dolly! The mind is so much the body's master that she grew old-looking as a result of this secret brooding, and grew petulant. Crissey could not help noticing that all was not right with her, and advised her to see a doctor, to take a tonic. But whenever he spoke of the matter, her pride came to the rescue, and she brightened up and told him bravely:

"There's nothing the matter; just a little tired to-day."

"Perhaps you need change of air," said Crissey

once. "When we get to Washington you'll be all right."

He would have been genuinely worried, but she had so thoroughly relieved him of all home cares during the peaceful years that he had lived with her that he unconsciously applied the confidence which she inspired in him even to her own case.

Whenever, in their early years, money was short, he had reflected, "Dolly will manage somehow."

And while he was writing his great book on corporations, or was throwing himself heart and mind into some difficult case, she did not distract him with the sicknesses of the children or the defections of the servants. He was absolutely sure that there was a wise, brave, true little woman at home.

If Jim took the measles, or if Agnes were down with the whooping-cough, Dolly was there; no need for him to go blundering around. If he inquired, as he frequently did, concerning any embarrassment or sickness at home, he was always given the bravest, most cheerful version of the affair.

So he threw himself into his life work with an energy that fed upon success. He did not realize that this brave, efficient little woman, with the level gray eyes, had a heart that yearned after tender-

ness as a bursting seed after the sun, and a mouth that ached for true-love's kisses as a rosebud for the dew.

A man who is writing books, trying law cases, and dreaming of the Senate, perhaps the Presidency—do not even whisper it—has not time to analyze the mysterious and contradictory elements of a woman's nature.

Poor Dolly made one pitiful effort to win back her husband's youthful love. "How can he love me," she thought, "if I allow myself to grow sad and old?" And for a brief time, she took unusual pains with her attire.

There was no reason for economy now, and she ordered several handsome street gowns and a new hat or two. She made a study of dressing her hair in the most becoming manner; and she devoted much thought to ribbons, matching them against her pale cheek, and to fresh and cheerful shirt waists for house wear. She even purchased an opera cloak and had made for herself an evening gown, a dainty thing of silvery white *peau de soie*, with a little pink about the shoulders and finishing the half-sleeves. There was a pink velvet bow, too, in front, and the girdle was of the same color in a soft shade. Such a robe turns a woman's clock



back ten years, if there be any of the girl left in her heart, and she be not spoiled by too much luxury.

This she tried on one morning, when the children were away at school, and, going down into the hall, with much trepidation lest Lena should catch sight of her, she surveyed herself in the full-length mirror there by the door. She thought the dress looked too young for her, and mounted the stairs again mournfully. She folded it carefully and put it away. When she opened the drawer from time to time and shook out its rustling skirt, it did not seem to be hers. It possessed the melancholy interest of a robe that had belonged to a dead friend, who had died young and long ago; or perhaps to a sister or a daughter whom she should never see again.

Edward did not even notice the street dresses and the new hats, though she made an especial effort to catch his eye with them. She donned them unfortunately in the busiest and most exciting days of his great campaign.

Of what use, then, to appear before him in the evening gown, and offer to accompany him to some reception? Clothes made no difference in her case. He would think her silly in her old age. It was he and not she, anyway, that people wanted to see.

She must not lose sight of that fact. He was a great man, she but a dull, plodding woman. And it was natural—oh God!—quite natural, that beautiful and accomplished ladies should admire him. At any rate, she would not give them the opportunity of seeing her discomfiture, of nodding their heads at her, and of whispering:

"Do you see that stupid, ugly little stick there? That's the wife of the famous and brilliant Mr. Crissey."

"Impossible!"

"It is, though. He married her many years ago. And he's just of a marriageable age now. Think what a match he might have made had he waited! Any woman would be glad to take him now."

Crissey was attired in evening dress on the night of his election because he was invited to attend a fashionable reception at the Wilsons'. His full-fledged reputation as an orator and the respectability of his support would have made him a social lion, even in case of defeat.

As soon as decisive returns began to come in, Mrs. Wilson, widely awake to social possibilities, telephoned her husband to make sure of Crissey. The reception should become a function in honor of the famous orator, the new member of Congress.

The genial Wilson, who felt a great personal ad-

admiration for Crissey, went over to the latter's office late in the afternoon, and found him listening to returns which his secretary was calling out from time to time from the telephone. Wilson stood in the door for a moment, pulling his red mustache so violently that he somewhat distorted the smile that crept over his face. Then he removed his gold *pince-nez*, closing his eyes tightly several times and opening them again as he polished the glasses with a silk handkerchief.

"Sounds all right, don't it?" he asked at last. There were two or three men standing about Crissey, and the latter had not noticed the famous corporation counsel. Crissey whirled around and extended his hand.

"Ah, Wilson, how are you? Yes, I think we can safely say now that all doubts are removed."

"I called to congratulate you," said Wilson, taking the extended hand in both of his own. "I can't tell you how much genuine pleasure this gives me. Like all good citizens, I rejoice that the right man has won out for once; and, moreover, I take a personal satisfaction in this thing, on account of my—ah—friendship for you."

It is hard for shrewd, hard-headed men to say these things. The trouble is that most men think themselves less sentimental than they really are.

"I want to see you a moment," he added, still holding the hand. A couple of the men in the office turned quickly and glanced at the caller, who laughed.

"Have no fears," he said, as Crissey led him toward the door of a private office. "I don't want anything—of an official nature."

"Well, I just wanted to speak to you," he explained, refusing a seat. "My wife has made up her mind that you are coming to her reception to-night, and that settles it. She'll have you there if she has to send the police after you. I simply wished to forewarn you of your fate, that you might be prepared for it. Seriously, we should very much like to see you and Mrs. Crissey there."

"I thank Mrs. Wilson for the invitation," replied Crissey. "I will make an effort to come. I think I can safely promise to be there; about Mrs. Crissey I am not so sure. She is not feeling very well these days. I am anxious to get her away. I think a change will do her good."

"Oh, bring her along; it will do her good to get out. Oh, by the way, one reason for Mrs. Wilson's anxiety to secure you for this evening: Senator Chapin's wife, of your old town, is here, and will be at our house to-night. She's quite a social leader in Washington, and will go bail for you and

Mrs. Crissey there. My wife is great on these social combinations. She enjoys them as some women do match-making. Do you know the senator?"

"I remember him as a boy," replied Crissey. "I heard him make a Fourth of July oration once. He has a nephew here in town—Harry Chapin—in the real estate business. Poor Harry isn't doing very well—a sort of a failure, in fact."

As Wilson passed out, the young man at the 'phone was shouting: "Crissey, three thirty; Gallagher, two fifteen."

## CHAPTER XXXIII

### "MY CUP RUNNETH OVER"

After the speech on the balcony, Crissey was kept busy for a couple of hours receiving congratulations from leading politicians, and calls of a more troublesome nature—from persons who seized the earliest opportunity to emphasize the importance of their services.

He was glad of an excuse to break away from these and close himself in a cab headed for the Wilsons'. Dolly was not going with him. He had asked her, it is true, telling her cheerfully that she might as well get into practice now, as she would find herself in a perfect social whirl as soon as they got to Washington; but she pleaded a headache, due to excitement. The fact of the matter is, that she was overwhelmed by the noisy proofs of his greatness—the music, the shouting, and the eloquence from the balcony. She was fully confirmed, at last, in her idea that she was a mere clog tied to the foot of a demi-god, a melancholy ghost of his cruel past.

"And I have been a good wife to you, Edward," she sobbed in the loneliness of her room. "I did help you in those days when we were poor together. Oh, why didn't we stay poor always?"

She was tired, very tired, for the day had been one of great excitement to her; so she undressed, and crept into bed by the side of little Dorothy, who turned over without waking up, and, stretching out one tiny hand, laid it lovingly upon her mother's face. The child gave a deep sigh of contentment as she felt in her dreams that dear and sure presence, and her tender body responded again to the deep breaths of happy childhood, rhythmical waves upon the sea of sleep.

Mrs. Crissey had scarcely pulled the blanket about her shoulders when the telephone bell began to ring in Edward's study—that insistent, startling whir which generally means so little, but which seems to say, especially if it be heard at night, that the house is on fire.

She slipped out of the bed and ran to the telephone in her bare feet, anxious to get there and take down the receiver before the children should awaken.

"Yes," she cried, louder than necessary, for she never could get over the idea that one must shout to be heard so far—"hello! hello!"

"Hello, hello-o-o!" replied a woman's voice. "Is this the residence of Mr. Crissey—Mr. Edward Crissey?"

"Yes; this is Mr. Crissey's house."

"Is he in?"

All of Dolly's wits were on the *qui vive* on the instant.

"He was here but a moment ago," she replied. "Is there any message I can deliver to him?"

"I would like to know merely if he has started for the Wilsons', or if he is coming here? Mrs. Chapin is here and would like very much to see him. Tell Mrs. Crissey—"

Dolly dropped the receiver as though it had been a snake.

"That cat again!" she whispered. "That shameless creature! Oh, I could kill her!"

Then she snatched the receiver, placed it to her ear, and almost shrieked:

"What did you say to tell Mrs. Crissey?"

There was no answer, so she rang the bell furiously, and a flat, mechanical voice replied:

"What number, please?"

"What? What did you say?"

"What number, please?"

She hung the receiver up again, and paced the floor, muttering:



"What shall I do? Oh, what shall I do?"

And at last she decided. Stamping her little foot upon the floor and thrusting out her square chin, while her gray eyes turned to tempered steel in the heat of her rage, she decided.

"I will go where my husband is," she exclaimed. "I'll go where he is, and never let him out of my sight. He's mine, he belongs to me; and nobody shall take him away from me while I am alive."

She glided up the stairs, a pale and angry ghost, and arranged her hair with a few deft touches. She got into the white silk dress, she hardly knew how, in an incredibly short space of time, wrapped the opera cloak about her, threw a silk scarf over her head, and stole downstairs and into the street, a white, sweet, fluffy incarnation of tragedy. She had formed no definite idea of how she should reach the Wilsons'. Her first impulse was to walk. Modern rapid transit is not at all suited to the elation of old, primeval tragedy. One wants to get into action, to have his muscles feel as though they were taking him somewhere. Riding in a car, even though it be going fifty miles an hour to the scene of revenge or of victory, is only sitting still, after all.

But in this city of wide distances walking is seldom practicable, even when assisted by the wings of

jealousy. Fortunately for Dolly, an empty cab rumbled up from behind, and the driver, pulling his horse to the curb, asked in an insinuating voice:

"Cab, Madam; cab? Take you to any part of the city."

"I want to go to Mrs. Frederick Wilson's, on State Street," said Dolly.

"What number?"

"I don't know. It's a big house near Lincoln Park."

"All right. Get right in; I'll find it."

And he jumped down and opened the door for her.

The jehu scratched his head as he drove off. Cabmen see many strange things and catch glimpses of numberless romances and tragedies. They have their night patrons divided into classes, and can tell almost at a glance to what class any particular fare belongs.

But here was something decidedly different. This fare was not a *demi-mondaine*; neither was she drunk, although she seemed excited. She was dressed like a regular swell, "the real thing," and she had even given the address of one of the most fashionable houses in the city. But why was she walking? It was only one chance in a thousand that a cab had passed at that hour in that locality. This

one had been taking a "gent" home from the Rock Island depot, who had wished to bring his trunk right along with him on top of the cab. At any rate she ought to be good for a "fiver."

These ruminations occupied his mind during the entire extent of the course. It was with considerable curiosity that he threw open the door of his vehicle at last and peered within, saying:

"Here we are, Madam."

Would he find her asleep inside, drunk, after all? Tony "Backup," as everybody called him, a hunch-backed *confrère* of his, had once driven a mysterious lady, all toggled out like that, about for two hours, and had found her dead when he opened the door—dead, with a bottle of carbolic acid in her hand.

"Here we are, Madam—" Dolly stepped out in front of the great stone dry-goods box of a house, so brilliantly lighted, and made briskly for the front steps.

"Shall I wait?" called the cabman anxiously.

She stopped, slightly embarrassed, and brought nearer to earth than at any moment since making her heroic resolve. She had not a cent with her. Had she taken a street car, she would not have been able to pay her fare.

"Yes, wait," she replied. In reality, she did not care what he did.

She rang and the door opened. The jehu was much relieved to see that she went in and stayed in.

"She's all right, after all," he muttered. "That ought to be worth a tenner," and he entered his cab, closed the door, and went to sleep.

"First door at the right, top of the stairs, for ladies' wraps," said a gentlemanly butler with English whiskers.

Through a door at her left Dolly saw a throng of ladies in fashionable attire. A few of them were chattering together, but nearly all were facing one way, many of them standing on tiptoe, as though listening to some one. At the end of the long hall, which extended beyond the wide staircase, another door was ajar. Voices slipped through the opening, men's voices, and applause.

She heard her husband's name called, and then the familiar cry:

"Crissey, Crissey; speech, speech!"

There was nobody in the hall, and she tripped toward the door without taking off her cloak. Standing so that she was concealed from those within, she listened. The applause broke out anew. She removed the lace scarf and peeped within. The air was a blue inferno of tobacco smoke in that

room, and a table full of jolly demons in evening dress were turned expectantly toward a man who was standing, one hand resting gracefully on the board, while a gimlet of blue smoke trembled upward from the cigar which he held between two fingers of the other. It was her husband.

How handsome he looked! He was standing very near her, and she drew her head back quickly lest he see and recognize her.

He began to speak, and it seemed to her quite natural that his voice should be serious, his tones sympathetic and moving, even for a festive occasion.

"In the absence of Senator Chapin," he began, "you have asked me to respond to the toast, 'The Ladies.' I can not help feeling that this—ah—this appointment is somewhat in the nature of a joke, that its very inappropriateness gives it an element of humor consonant with the gaiety of this occasion. Though always entertaining the profoundest respect for the sex, I have never been a ladies' man in the general acceptation of the term. I can not help thinking how much more fitting it would have been had the senator been here to respond to this sentiment. The senator is a handsome man, a courtly man. He possesses all those little refinements of manner and delicacies of address which

endear a man to the sex. Through those as well as through his sterling worth, he won in early youth the hand of a woman who has been chief ornament of his brilliant career, the bright but tender guiding star of his destiny." The congressman was perfectly at ease now.

"While as true to that star as the needle to the pole, yet he has necessarily been a ladies' favorite all his life. Who knows how many sweet flowers of sentiment may have yearned toward him in secret, upon how many gentle hearts he may, unwittingly, have trod? With me it has been different. Not possessing the senator's brilliant gifts, I have won whatever of success has crowned my career by stern and unrelenting toil. The ladies have scarcely taken note of my existence, and, I confess it with shame, I—ah—have had little time to cultivate feminine society. I say, 'with shame,' for every man is better and completer for the refined and uplifting influence of good women. He can not have too much of it. But I can not let this opportunity pass without paying public tribute to the virtues and graces of two noble ladies—two sweet, gracious women to whom I owe all that I am or hope to be. It is fitting that I should pay this tribute on the evening of this, my first really great and satisfying success in life.

"My mother died young—" Here the speaker's voice dropped to a lower, tenderer note. "But one of the clearest echoes from my departed youth, calling me back to those days of innocence, purity, and simple faith, is the soft, low voice of my mother. Oh, sweetest ghost that rises from the past, sad, tender, reproachful face, that makes us ashamed of our unworthiness! Glorious, saintlike smile, that blesses us when we do not forget!

"The other lady to whom I wish to pay tribute to-night, I have known for the past twenty years. She was watering roses in the front yard of her father's house when I first saw her. She looked up at me, and the afternoon sun fell upon what seemed to me then the fairest face in the whole world. She was dressed in white, I remember, with a wide straw hat upon her head and a watering can in her hand. Gentlemen, the years have added some wrinkles to that face, the wand of time has touched those brown locks with gray; but that woman is fairer this minute in my eyes than on the day when I married her. If I told how much she has helped me, how much she has done for me, I should weary you with her praises, and the sickly gray of dawn would be creeping in at the windows ere I had done. I will not go into the details of our early life, when we occupied two

little rooms in a farm house five miles from a country village, and I walked the whole distance twice a day, acting as court stenographer, and studying law evenings. I will not tell you how she did her own work in those strenuous, happy—always happy days—mended my clothes, cared for the children, economized somehow so that we always got along—but I am telling you. Suffice to say, that without her I should not be where I am to-night; for the main thing she has given has been some part of her splendid courage. When I have been despondent, she has been cheerful; when I have been afraid or faint by the way, she has been brave. Her unflinching faith in me, even when unworthy, has given me faith in myself. Frail, seemingly weak, sometimes sick, she has looked down the years with level gray eyes, always hopeful, always brave. I tell you, gentlemen, there is more true courage in the tender heart of one little woman, one true little woman, than in the breasts of a dozen of the greatest men that ever lived.

“And such a woman is the high priestess of a man’s home. She makes of it a sacred temple. Her heart is a swinging censer, and she fills his house with the wholesome incense of wife-love, mother-love; and no evil spirits dare enter therein.

“Perhaps, after all, I am not so unworthy to re-



spond to this sentiment, 'The Ladies!' These two women that I have known have made me hold the entire sex in reverence, to see something good in the worst of women.

"May I ask you now to give tribute with me to Caesar? It may seem a strange thing to do, but you will understand it, I am sure. I ask you to drink to the good health of Congressman Dolly Crissey."

"Please let me out," whispered Dolly a moment later to the butler. "I—I want to go home."

"Leaving so early?" inquired a well-modulated feminine voice.

Dolly glanced around, and saw a tiny woman in a yellow empire gown, with a bunch of black velvet on her breast, and a butterfly of diamonds blazing in her hair. An aigrette of white feathers added to her height. Her attitude was politely, though keenly, inquisitive.

Dolly felt that this was the hostess, and that she was doing a most unconventional thing in stealing from the house in this manner. She was fairly caught and must explain.

"I am Mrs. Crissey," she said frankly, though greatly agitated. She had no cause to be ashamed of her name, however. "I came to surprise Mr. Crissey—to show him my new gown, and I

overheard. I—I—am so ashamed." Mrs. Wilson did not know why the little woman should be ashamed; but her own heart had been strangely touched by the speech which she had just heard. She gave Dolly an impulsive hug—a quite unconventional hug, and kissed her.

"You dear! I'll let you run away now, if you want to, but we must see you again soon—we must see you often. James, show Mrs. Crissey to her carriage. Good night, dear."

This old world had suddenly grown so kind to Dolly. It was as though the sun had just slid out from an eclipse. Yet she could not help sobbing as she threw herself back into a corner of the seat.

"Why couldn't he have told me! Oh, why couldn't he have told me?"

The toasts had been a happy idea of Mrs. Wilson's, always fertile in surprises for her guests. She wished to let Chicago society hear the famous orator make an after-dinner speech. Need it be said that her scheme had met with the most gratifying success?

"I saw Mrs. Crissey, Fred," she whispered a moment later to her husband. "She was here, and she heard. She'll do. She's nicer than he is, if possible; and he meant every word of it."

Five minutes after making his speech Crissey

bade adieu to the hostess and left the house. He had one more reception to attend that evening, not far from his own home. It was a stag party; and, remembering the theater program, he determined to stop at the house and put on a black necktie. He drove fast, and arrived but a moment after Dolly. The hall was dark, and he turned on the electric light with a quick snap of the button.

There she stood, leaning against the lower balustrade of the stairway, all in white and pink. Her face, flushed with mingled shame and joy, looked shyly at him from the delicate folds of the lace scarf. The cloak lay in a ring of white silk and fluffy fur about her feet.

And suddenly love triumphed over shame; shame for weakness and mistrust which he should never know.

The flush of a whole life's triumph mounted to her cheeks; its joy sat on her parted lips. The sunlight and moonlight and starlight of love burned in her glorified eyes and beckoned him like a beacon. He strode toward her with arms open.

"Why, Dolly," he cried, "how young you look!"

THE END